

NEW

SHOOT LIKE A PRO

Enhance your photography skills with professional secrets

196

*pages of practical
tips, tricks and
techniques*

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LANDSCAPES TO
THE NEXT LEVEL**

*Discover how to
earn money from
your captures*

**ADD VIDEO TO YOUR
REPERTOIRE WITH
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WELCOME TO SHOOT LIKE A PRO

The jump from enthusiast to professional can seem massive, but it is actually far less of a stretch than you think. Once you have mastered key techniques and essential photographic skills, it is just a case of refining them. Shoot Like A Pro is jam-packed with professional tips and techniques that will help you to take your skills to the next level. Learn from the informative features and follow the in-depth shooting and editing tutorials that will ensure you can produce high-quality professional looking captures. Discover secrets straight from working professional photographers and get essential career advice that will help you start earning money from your photography, as well as how to manage your business and keep your clients happy.

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F U T U R E
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SHOOT LIKE A PRO

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Getty Images

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Printed in the UK

Distributed by Marketforce, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU
www.marketforce.co.uk Tel: 0203 787 9001

Shoot Like A Pro Third Edition (PTB4384)

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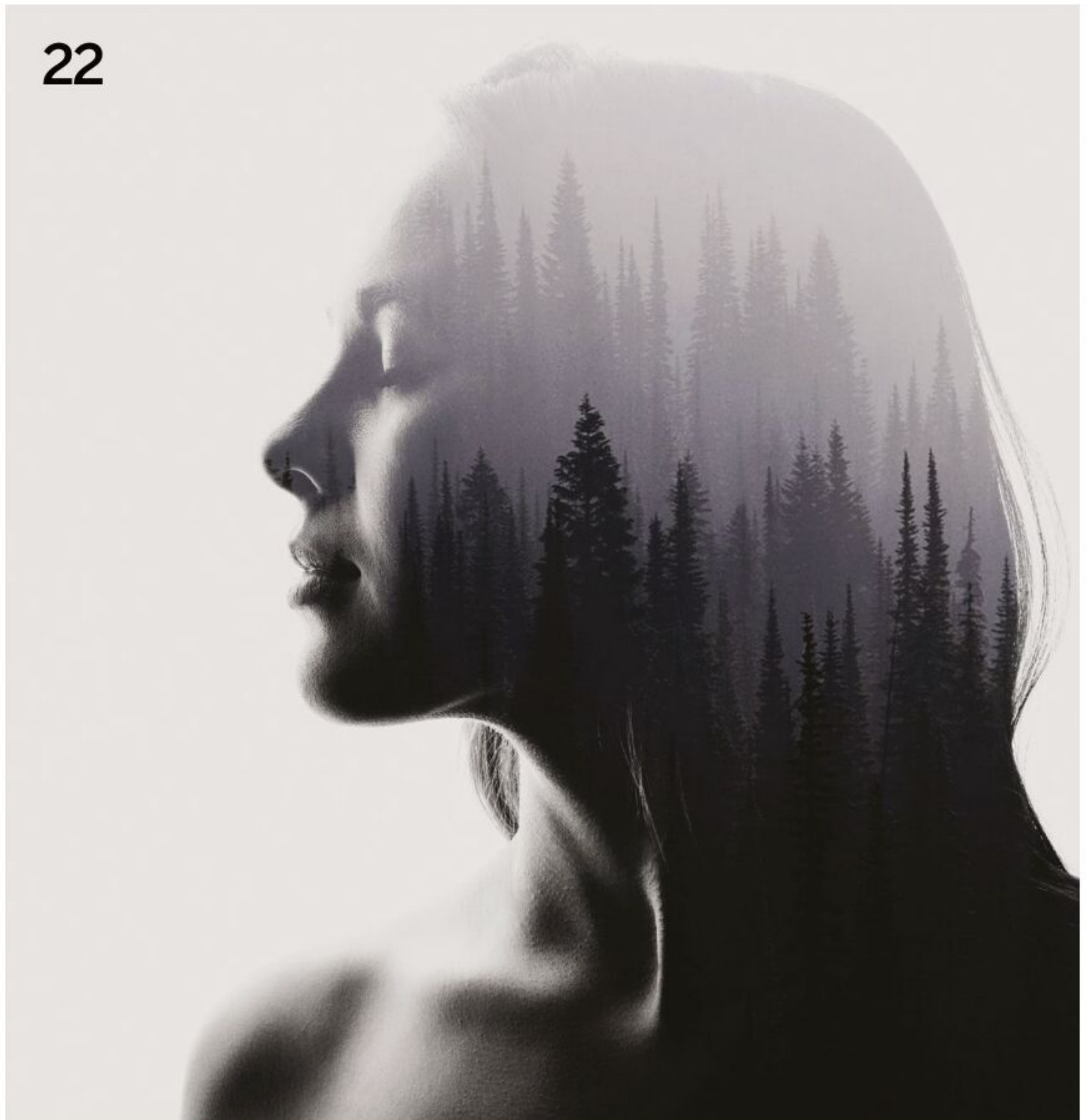
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Get ready to go pro

Get set to take a big step forward in your photographic career

Choosing to shoot images professionally is one of the biggest decisions in a photographer's life, and represents a significant change in direction for their progression as a creative. For many amateur and enthusiast photographers, being able to make a career from taking photos is a dream scenario – combining their passion with a new creative challenge seems like the ultimate goal. It is certainly true that for some this decision has been the best one they could have made, and they have gone on to have a long and prosperous career. Under the correct conditions photography can be both creatively rewarding and financially sustainable.

However, there are many aspects to running a successful business that enthusiasts rarely consider. Firstly there is the responsibility of promising a client a set of images that will meet their brief perfectly. Jobs such as weddings only happen once, and any mistakes on the photographer's part can be disastrous. You have to be confident that you can deliver on your contract, and failure to do so can be costly. Secondly and arguably of most significance to someone 'going pro', there is the matter of business sense – while you may be competent

as a photographer, running a profitable business requires an entirely independent skillset. As a professional you have to be able to balance the creative, financial and legal strands of your business operation in equal measure.

If setting up a photography business is an endeavour you feel is right for you, it is critical that you understand the market. Making money from photography has always been challenging, but is especially so today. The pro arena is exceptionally crowded, with much competition in almost every genre, most significantly wedding and portrait photography. Add to this the high operating costs you will experience and it becomes apparent that a clear plan of action is needed.

Your main consideration as a start-up business will be the genre to focus on. While this is obviously driven by your photographic interests and skills, it will impact your equipment choices and required business plan, so must be chosen with care. Photographers cannot avoid high overheads, since cameras, lenses and lighting all represent large fixed costs, but these can be minimised by building an efficient and relevant inventory of gear. This can only be decided upon,

however, if you know the type of images you expect to be creating.

Furthermore, you must ask yourself if you intend to be a specialist in a limited range of subject areas, or if it is better for you to cover a wider spectrum of assignments. This will aid in your choice of equipment – if you focus on one area only it will be logical to buy lenses and accessories specific to that, instead of investing in a full range of focal lengths and lighting products for every scenario. The advantages of pitching yourself as a specialist is that you can attract business from wider geographic areas, without placing yourself in direct competition with local photographers. You will be able to streamline your operation by tailoring your workflow to a known subject type, allowing a greater image turnover and, dependent on client demand, increase revenue.

However, you do need to be sure there is a sufficient market for you to explore within an accessible range from your base location. Specialist jobs can often be seasonal or infrequent, so before committing be confident you can find work throughout the year, or alternatively be willing and able to adapt your focus in 'low periods' to sustain profit.



TECHNIQUES

The next biggest decision will be whether or not you should invest in a studio. If your intent is to regularly shoot portraits or products, you may find it essential to have a dedicated studio space in which to create complex lighting setups. If you are uncertain over this necessity, however, in the first instance it is advisable to remain mobile due to the excessive cost of renting and maintaining an under-utilised property.

Pricing is another major skill you will have to master as a professional. There is an art to correctly pricing your work so that you are competitive while maintaining profitability. Look at what other photographers working in similar areas are charging and decide if asking for payment per product (print or digital file) or per hour is most suitable for your style of business.

Understandably, the biggest contributor to the success of your business is the quality of your photography. Your images must stand out if they are to be noticed, so developing a signature style is important. There are a limited commercial subjects, so a pro image has to capture each in a unique way. Professional photography must give the impression that it could not have been created by the client themselves, demonstrating the relevance of your expertise. Most critically, it must be obvious that the photographer has taken time to capture exactly what the client needs. When turning professional, you must adapt your creative philosophy – no longer base your concept of a successful image solely on your likes and dislikes; you must cater exclusively for the tastes of your client. While challenging, this will make your work more sellable.

In order to develop a unique style, experimentation is required, both in-camera and at the computer. In the digital age, equal expertise is needed in camera work and post-production techniques. Much of the creation of a personalised 'look' occurs in software, so try editing your images in several different ways to see what results you can produce. At the camera, try working with various lighting setups, changing the direction of light and the balance between artificial flash light and natural ambient illumination.

The main reasons that photography businesses fail include a lack of clear brand, under-researched market demands and inflexibility to changes in these requirements. Turning pro is a daunting prospect, but with good preparation and a solid business strategy, you will be well placed to succeed.

KATARINA NICHOL

Storytelling-style wedding photographer Katarina provides her insight into the process of turning a passion into a profession

How long have you been a pro photographer? What is your background in photography?

I became a professional photographer roughly six years ago. I was developing myself through older cameras, first on the technical side of things and later artistically.

My first projects were captured on old cameras – usually people, nature and animals. Later I bought my first digital camera, and I found out what magic you can do with digital pictures and how you can show people such incredible storytelling. My style of photography was shaped over the years by learning from my photoshoots, different photography conditions and attending photography courses. It took a lot of time and effort.

What made you want to turn pro? What was your inspiration to make the jump?

Prior to taking the professional route, my curiosity was always on the technical side of cameras, how film works, what chemical reactions were making pictures appear on the film, etc. My father used to be an army documentary photographer, and later a wedding photographer, back in the 80s. He was always able to answer all of my questions and [taught me] to think outside of the box and add extra value to my photographs. I guess this is something I share with him – the passion and love for the unexpected and capturing

the moment as it happens. In my opinion, unrepeatable moments are very important in life, and capturing them gives me fulfilment and so much joy that a decision for my future changed from a blur to completely clear. This is what I want to spend my time on.

What were the greatest challenges of the process, and how did you overcome these?

The biggest challenge during my way to becoming a professional photographer was the marketing side of photography, as this was something where strict decisions have to be made. You have to target what is it you want to concentrate on, get to know the market, spend a lot of time learning and developing marketing strategies, think about new ways of marketing yourself and keep yourself updated with the newest marketing tools.

What have been the most rewarding aspects of making a living from photography?

I definitely love what I do. Taking photographs makes me relaxed, the world around me stops and it makes me enjoy the moment. There is also the big excitement of seeing the end results. What makes me very happy is the feeling of being completely free of any restrictions, as photography is an artistic discipline and therefore there is no right or wrong way of doing it, so I can get as artistic as I wish!

“My style of photography was shaped by photoshoots, different conditions and courses”





Top left

Beautifully unique

By investing time and effort in shooting and processing experimentation before starting your business, you are better prepared to be competitive through originality of style. Introduce some personality to target your market

Left

Shoot what you love

Katarina advocates specialising your business around areas of photography that interest you personally in an effort to fully immerse yourself in the subject matter and drive your connection to it

Pro's top 5 tips

Katarina Nichol shares her advice on going pro

1 Decide what type of photography you want to concentrate on – is it portrait, kids, nature or events? As most photographers are amateurs before becoming professionals, I think it is important to decide what is the most enjoyable for you, as there is nothing better than spending your time on something you like.

2 Enjoy it. If you feel that it is not bringing you joy, change genre and try something different for now. Sometimes it's nice to change your routine and discover new things and ways. You can always come back and stick to the original plan, but with fresh views and insights.

3 Take your camera everywhere to shape yourself as a photographer. It is very useful when you fall into a challenging situation with clients, and you know how to sort things out, because you experienced this issue already when you were not under pressure from anyone.

4 Becoming a pro photographer is a long journey. You have to work hard in many aspects of it, but it is the most rewarding job, where you might capture people's memories and it will make you feel proud of what you do. There will be some challenging times, but do not give up.

5 Make it unique and develop your style. It is a good thing to get inspiration from other photographers, but do not copy them. Clients will love you for your unique style and the personality you bring into their photographs. It is an art, so you can express yourself as much as you like!

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DAN BURMAN

Portrait and corporate photographer Dan on juggling creativity with commercial sustainability in a busy marketplace

How long have you been a pro photographer? What is your background in photography?

I have been a professional photographer for about 11 years. I bought my first film SLR when I was 10 years old, as I wanted to be a nature photographer. I used this camera extensively in my art foundation course, and also while travelling in my gap year. I went on to study fine art at St Martins, and ended up specialising in photography.

What made you want to turn pro? What was your inspiration to make the jump?

I was doing crummy bar work at racecourses and events while shooting editorial on the side for next to nothing. One of the waitresses I was working with was also an aspiring photographer, and we both hated the bar work. We realised we were both wasting our time doing it, and agreed to start shooting weddings together. This initial wedding photography business was the stepping stone for me out of dead-end jobs.

How do you balance the business and creative sides of your operation?

This can be tricky, especially for those of us who are less business minded. I guess the main thing is staying on top of it and not neglecting things. For example, doing my tax return used to involve dumping a year's worth of receipts on

the floor and spending two days going through them. It was an absolute nightmare! Now, I have a spreadsheet saved on my phone, and all expenses go into that on the day.

What are the most important aspects of becoming established in a competitive market?

It's so hard standing out these days – there are tons of great photographers out there. Succeeding depends on many things: hard work, networking, self promotion and having a great portfolio. But I guess in an overcrowded market the main thing should be offering something unique. Try to do something others aren't. This may be developing your own unique visual style or coming up with fresh concepts.

What have been the most rewarding aspects of making a living from photography?

There are loads of benefits to being a professional photographer. I go to interesting places, cool events and I meet interesting people. Also, it's creative, which is incredibly important for me. Another massive advantage is the personal freedom it offers me timewise. This was really great, as it meant I could spend loads of time with my son in his early years, although I did have to ditch wedding photography once he started school, as that was taking up all my weekends and summers.





Top right

Choose jobs wisely

Work to your strengths by selecting assignments that use skills you are comfortable employing. It is tempting to accept any job as a start-up, but this may not be advantageous

Above left

Less is more

Consider the images in your portfolio. The number of photographs is not an indicator of your skill – it is quality and relevance to your pitch that counts towards your success

Left

Organise for success

Keeping on top of admin will make the business management side of your operation more streamlined and enable you to focus on the creative tasks you most enjoy about photography

GET READY TO GO PRO

Pro's top tips

Dan Burman shares his advice on going pro

1 The work you display in your portfolio will dictate the enquiries you receive. This is where it's important to be strict with the content of your portfolio. Only put up pictures of the sort of thing you want to shoot more of, and be sure to display only your very best images!

2 Never stop developing and improving your professional image portfolio. There is no end to learning and experimenting in photography, so keep growing to develop your own brand and style!

3 Having a good professional network is also vital. Seek out both clients and other creatives in the industry. Meet other photographers and share the jobs you can do with them. They will reciprocate.

4 Manage your time well. You will need to juggle lots of things; social media, networking, emails, preparing for shoots, looking after kit, editing, budgets and tax, and finally the actual shooting.

5 Make yourself a one-month plan, three-month plan, six-month plan and one-year plan. Keep them on your phone and check them regularly to see how you're going.

6 Not all jobs will be right for you. For example, if you're approached to do a product shoot have never shot products before and know about the processing involved, then it may be better to pass that onto a colleague. Also, if a job sounds annoying, demanding or dodgy then it probably is, so it's advisable to steer clear.

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All images © Dan Burman

GET THE RIGHT KIT

Learn which cameras, lenses and accessories you need to build the perfect pro system

Choosing a camera is always a big decision, but when considering a professional lifestyle it is even more critical that your selection should be a well-researched one. A pro's gear should be seen as tools, which will allow you to do your job effectively, but with the plethora of models and available features on the market, it can be difficult to know exactly what is essential and what is otherwise a luxury or gimmick. A lesser-discussed aspect of a pro's life is repetition – you will often find yourself shooting similar images day after day,

at least as you are establishing your brand. Therefore, certain features will be vital, while others will go largely unused.

Not every camera is suitable for every shooting scenario. Characteristics to consider are low-light performance, speed, autofocus accuracy, build quality, sensor size and resolution, to name a few. A Full Frame sensor is a common pro choice, as the larger area provides higher resolutions without sacrificing image noise performance and dynamic range. However, there are disadvantages –

compatible lenses are larger and heavier, and Full Frame systems command larger initial investment. Speed of operation should match your expected common shooting environment – there is no need for an ultra-fast camera if you will only shoot in a fixed studio. It is impossible to buy a 'bad' camera today, as competition has driven alignment of specification. Your system choice will be almost exclusively based on making your life as a working professional as easy as possible.

“Characteristics to consider are low-light performance, speed, autofocus accuracy, build quality, sensor size and resolution, to name a few”

Don't buy everything in one go

Speedlights and triggers may be essential for some photographers but they won't necessarily suit every photography style. Build your kit up slowly and adapt it to the subjects and environments that you find yourself shooting in the most often.

Lens choice

Ensure you have a range of focal lengths at your disposal

Speedlights

A speedlight will allow you to create better images that the pop-up flash will

Multiple bodies

Having more than one camera body can be handy when on a busy shoot

Prime lenses

Fixed focal length lenses are usually faster and far brighter

THE STANDARD KIT

Pro photographers will have a minimum inventory of gear they require to run their business. This frequently includes two bodies, three to five main lenses, a speedlight and a tripod

CANON EOS 5DS

When resolution is essential, look no further than this pro favourite for pixels and pricing

Canon's 5D series of cameras was the first to bring Full Frame digital imaging to the masses, offering pro level image quality, but at a lower price than the higher-end 1D series and the 'single digit' Nikon pro DSLRs. The 5Ds continues this tradition, and provides a stunning 50.6 megapixel resolution for exceptionally large prints and detailed images at several thousand pounds cheaper than the EOS 1DX Mark II. The EOS 5Ds is now arguably Canon's flagship studio and landscape camera, and while it may not



A high-spec, pro-grade camera offering tremendous value for money, consider a pair of EOS 5Ds bodies to kick-start your business.

have the same level of weather sealing as the 1D range, for a first camera to kick off your professional career, it will provide a better balance of investment and versatility. Compact Flash and SD card compatibility is a useful and increasingly rare feature, while

more compact dimensions than the Nikon D5 or EOS 1DX Mark II make it perfect for studio and location work.

Specifications

Model Canon EOS 5DS
Price £2,349/\$3,499
Web canon.co.uk
Megapixels (effective) 50.6
Max resolution (pixels) 8688 x 5792
Sensor information 36x24mm CMOS
Shutter speed 30 – 1/8000sec, Bulb
ISO sensitivity 50-12,800 (extended)
Lens data/Zoom Canon EF Mount
Exposure modes P,A,S,M
Metering options Evaluative, Centre-Weighted, Partial, Spot
Flash modes N/A
Connectivity USB 3, HDMI Mini (Type C)
Weight 946g (inc. battery)
Dimensions 152 x 116 x 76 mm
Batteries Li-Ion
Storage CF1, SD, SDHC, SDXC
LCD 3.2in 1,044K dots
Viewfinder Pentaprism, 100% coverage, 0.71x magnification

A high-spec, pro-grade camera offering tremendous value for money, consider a pair of EOS 5Ds bodies to kick-start your business.

NIKON D5

The flagship of the Nikon system is a beast in terms of specification and size

Sitting at the top of the Nikon DSLR line-up is the D5, which with a resolution of less than 21 megapixels and a continuous shooting rate of 12 frames per second, is aimed squarely at sport and wildlife photographers. It offers a superior build quality and durable shutter curtain, making it ideal for any working professional who is creating thousands of images every week. The built-in vertical grip provides comfortable shooting in portrait orientation, featuring duplicated controls, and the



The D5 is the ideal professional solution for photographers valuing low-light image quality and speed over absolute pixel count.

advanced in-camera processing has enabled Nikon to install a maximum ISO sensitivity of 102,400. While this may not see everyday use, the excellent low-light performance make the D5 ideal for weddings, interiors and events, where flash may not be appropriate. When it is preferred,

the D5 is compatible with the Nikon Creative Lighting System, enabling complex flash setups using an external flash, such as the Speedlight SB5000.

The Nikon D5 is arguably the camera all Nikon system users aspire to own, but at a high price.

Specifications

Model Nikon D5
Price £5,399/\$6,497
Web nikon.co.uk
Megapixels (effective) 20.8
Max resolution (pixels) 5568 x 3712
Sensor information 35.9x23.9mm CMOS
Shutter speed 30-1/8000sec, Bulb
ISO sensitivity 100-102,400 (extended)
Lens data/Zoom Nikon F Mount
Exposure modes P,A,S,M
Metering options Matrix, Centre-weighted, Highlight-weighted, Spot
Flash modes Front curtain, Rear curtain sync, Slow sync, High speed
Connectivity USB 3.0 Micro-B, HDMI (Type C)
Weight 1415 g (inc. battery)
Dimensions 160x159x92 mm
Batteries Li-Ion
Storage Dual Compact Flash or XQD
LCD 3.2in 1,044K dots
Viewfinder Pentaprism, 100% coverage, 0.72x magnification

SONY A7R III

If you value a lightweight system, this mirrorless option is a professional performer

There has been a significant shift in the camera market in recent years, with mirrorless models taking centre stage in the battle for professional custom. While they may have been seen as a mere curiosity in their infancy, compact system cameras (CSC) now come with truly professional specifications. The Sony A7R III is a firm pro favourite, providing Full Frame compatibility, high resolution, excellent noise characteristics and a surprising speed of operation. Despite its 42.4 megapixel sensor the A7R III can shoot at up to 10 frames per second, ideal for both studio-based and event photographers. The top extended ISO sensitivity matches the Canon EOS 1DX



Offering all you could realistically want from a camera, this Sony cements the A7R range as the professional mirrorless-users choice.

Mark II and Nikon D5 and the sensor is capable of a 15 stop dynamic range – perfect in high contrast lighting. Dual card slots, a solid build, touch-sensitive LCD and a bright, clear electronic

viewfinder make the A7R III a professional workhorse.

The A7R III weighs significantly less than similarly specified DSLRs.

Specifications

Model Sony a7R III
Price £2,699/\$3,198
Web sony.co.uk
Megapixels (effective) 42.4
Max resolution (pixels) 7952 x 5304
Sensor information 35.9x24.0mm Exmor R CMOS
Shutter speed 30-1/8000sec, Bulb
ISO sensitivity 50-102,400 (extended)
Lens data/Zoom Sony E Mount
Exposure modes Auto, P,A,S,M
Metering options Multi-segment, Center-weighted, Highlight, Entire Screen Avg, Spot, Spot Standard/Large
Flash modes Auto, Fill, Slow sync, Rear sync, Red-eye, Wireless, High Speed
Connectivity USB 3.1, HDMI Micro (Type D), Wifi, Bluetooth, NFC
Weight 657g (inc. battery and card)
Dimensions 126.9 x 95.6 x 73.7mm approx
Batteries Li-Ion
Storage Memory Stick PRO Duo, Memory Stick PRO-HG Duo, Memory Stick Micro (M2), SD, SDHC, SDXC
LCD 3.2in 1,044K dots
Viewfinder 3,686,400 Dot EVF, 100% coverage, 0.78x Magnification

EXPLORE ADDITIONAL CAMERAS

Consider these other options when looking to build a flexible professional system

CANON EOS 1DX MARK II

The direct competitor to the Nikon D5, this Canon flagship offers a built-in vertical grip for steady, comfortable portrait shooting, superb low light quality and superior construction. While less of a studio camera, it is unrivalled in the Canon range for its versatility.



NIKON Z7

Nikon's response to the Sony A7R III, the 45.7MP Full Frame sensor of the Z7 allows detailed images, pro-level depth-of-field control and colour rendition, in a lower weight package than the D850. Lens choice is currently limited, but this will no doubt change.



NIKON D850

Often described as one of the best DSLRs ever made, this Nikon is level with the Canon EOS 5DS, and targets a very similar market. The 45.7MP sensor lags behind slightly in resolution, but a maximum frame rate of 9fps is possible with the MB-D18 grip.



OLYMPUS OM-D E-M1X

Marking Olympus' re-entry into the professional market, the E-M1X uses the smaller Micro 4/3 sensor format. While this may limit the pixel count, 20.4MP is enough. The vertical grip is a nice touch, as the mirrorless construction and lighter lenses keep it portable.



PANASONIC LUMIX S1

Often overlooked as a pro option, the Lumix series has some genuinely attractive features, and the new S1 adds Full Frame imaging to the mix. The high resolution mode is a standout tool, merging multiple frames to create huge 96MP files. A worthy contender.



CHOOSE ESSENTIAL LENSES

Craft your professional system by selecting the right lenses for your day-to-day requirements

Lenses represent the greatest indicator of the worth of a camera system. Both the image quality they are able to produce and the breadth of the focal lengths and functions covered are important aspects to consider when looking to invest in a manufacturer brand. Entry-level lenses, such as those bundled with a camera, provide a good everyday focal range, covering the majority of common subjects, but do not offer the sharpness, colour reproduction or

contrast of pro optics. A professional lens can resolve great detail in an image and through the use of advanced glass, known as Low Dispersion (LD) elements, produces minimal colour fringing along high contrast edges. Special coatings, such as fluorine, offer easy cleaning via resistance to dust and water adhering to the glass, and super spectra coatings reduce flare. Pro photographers should have a range of lenses, from wide angle (approximately

16mm) to 'standard' (35-50mm) and medium telephoto (70-200mm), to cover any situation they may find themselves in. Only if specialising should you consider ultra-telephoto, macro and tilt/shift lenses.

“Special coatings, such as fluorine, offer easy cleaning via resistance to dust and water adhering to the glass”



ULTRA-WIDE ANGLE

Go wide for group shots, environmental portraits and inclusive interiors

The wide-aperture wideangle is a must-have lens for the event photographer who wishes to capture images handheld in poor lighting. The Nikkor 14-24mm f2.8G ED has become established as a firm professional favourite, for its sharp optics, low distortion characteristics and excellent contrast. The 14mm minimum focal length provides an inclusive 114° angle of view, which is perfect for landscapes, architecture, interiors and large group portraits. Meanwhile, the f2.8 maximum aperture equals that of the longer AF-S NIKKOR 24-70mm f2.8G ED, meaning that settings need not be changed when swapping lenses on-the-job. The lens construction features ED glass for low chromatic aberration, while the Nano Crystal Coat cuts down on internal reflections, minimising ghosting effects, when shooting towards strong light sources. The biggest disadvantage of the lens is a lack of filter thread, but filter adaptors are now available specifically for this model.



A lens with a large angle of view will enable you to include more in your frame. However, watch out for distortion and be extra mindful of your compositions.

Specifications

Model AF-S Nikkor 14-24mm f2.8G ED
Price £1,799/\$1,897
Web nikon.co.uk
Elements/construction 14/11
Angle of view 114° to 84°
Max aperture f2.8
Min aperture f22
Min focus distance 0.28cm
Mount Nikon F Mount
Exposure modes P,A,S,M
Filter size N/A
Length 131.5mm
Diameter 98mm
Weight 1000g

STANDARD ZOOM

Make use of the professionals' standard lens for everyday photography

The 24-70mm range is the 'standard' for full frame systems. Many pro photographers will find themselves keeping their 24-70mm f2.8 mounted on their camera for the majority of their working day, since it is suitable for almost every subject and shooting scenario. The original Canon EF 24-70mm f2.8 L USM was seen by many as a reason to select the EOS system, and this updated version receives improved build quality, tweaked optical design, but no image stabilisation. The optics incorporate a Super Ultra Low Dispersion (UD) aspheric element and two UD elements, for superior sharpness and coloured fringing reduction. The filter thread is larger than the Mark I version at 82mm (compared to 77mm), meaning if

you are upgrading from the older lens you will need to update your filter system. This is a must-have

lens for Canon users, while Nikon and Sony's equivalents compete successfully.



Specifications	
Model	EF 24-70mm f2.8L II USM
Price	£1,679/\$1,599
Web	canon.co.uk
Elements/construction	18/13
Angle of view	84° to 34°
Max aperture	f2.8
Min aperture	f22
Min focus distance	0.38m
Mount	Canon EF
Filter size	82mm
Length	113mm
Diameter	88.5
Weight	805g

On the days when you don't want to take your whole kit bag out with you, a standard zoom is a great option that offers variety and flexibility.

“It is suitable for almost every subject and shooting scenario”

MEDIUM TELEPHOTO ZOOM

Perfect for portraits, events and landscapes, the 70-200mm is essential

The 70-200mm is the last of the common trio of professional f2.8 lenses, and is the best zoom option for portraits and events, providing a balance of weight, size, focal range, brightness and optical performance. This latest Canon option is a slight improvement over the Mark II version, most notably the addition of Canon's own Air Sphere Coating, which further reduces ghosting and flare. The lens also uses fluorine coatings

to minimise grease and particulate adhesion, making the outer elements easier to clean. The image stabiliser is less effective than similar lenses, providing 3.5 stops of correction, but optically the EF 70-200mm f2.8L IS III USM performs well, with superior sharpness across the frame. Build quality is also suitable for withstanding the rigours of professional use.



Compress perspective and shoot with more reach with a telephoto lens. They are great for striking portraits with stunning bokeh as well as wildlife and more.

Specifications	
Model	EF 70-200MM F2.8L IS III USM
Price	£2,099/\$2,099
Web	canon.co.uk
Elements/construction	23/19
Angle of view	1
Max aperture	f2.8
Min aperture	f32
Min focus distance	1.2m
Mount	Canon EF
Filter size	77mm
Length	199mm
Diameter	88mm
Weight	1480g

CHOOSE ESSENTIAL ACCESSORIES

Extend the versatility of your kit with these optional extras to achieve even better images

Natural light is perfect in many ways – it is abundant, powerful and free, making it the preference of many photographers, both amateur and professional. It does have its limits, however – the Sun produces strong directional light that cannot be repositioned or adjusted in output. Pro photographers rely on flash as a means of introducing controllable light to a scene, either as a primary light source or as a fill, in order to both lift shadows and reduce contrast.

The most popular choice of flash is the speedlight. These flash units attach to the camera via the dedicated hotshoe mount and provide variable output. When camera-mounted, the higher position of the flash reduces red-eye effects, while the movable head allows light to be bounced, for a softer interaction with the subject. When buying, look for a guide number of at least 45 to provide sufficient light output. A flashgun with slave operation permits even greater versatility via off-camera wireless

triggering. Pro units can be both slave or commander flashes.

Where wireless triggering is not internal, radio triggers are the pro choice for off-camera flash setups. Look for models with a minimum 100m range and multiple channels, the latter reducing interference from other photographers' equipment at larger events.

In addition to lighting itself, there are many photographic accessories available to enhance efficiency and enjoyment of image creation.

ILLUMINATE IT

Consider these other options when looking to build a flexible professional system

CANON SPEEDLITE 600EX II-RT FLASHGUN

Flashguns are generally rated based on their power and battery life. This professional Canon model features a guide number of 60 metres when the camera is set to a sensitivity of ISO100, providing long-range illumination. This is essential for events where the subject is distant from the camera or where the photographer cannot control the position of the subject, as is often the case for photojournalists. A wide panel allows coverage at 14mm for group shots. Handily, the wireless system works with both radio and optical triggering for maximum flexibility, with a workable range of up to 30 metres.



SONY HVL-F45RM WIRELESS RADIO FLASH

As with cameras and lenses, professional speedlights are available in a range of specifications and price points. Enthusiast-level flashes often have a stripped-back feature set, and although you may be looking to set up as a pro, it is worth considering if extra investment is necessary if you do not require the power of a top-of-the-range model. This Sony flash has a guide number of 45 at 105mm, but still offers an integral wide panel for 15mm coverage, built-in wireless radio transmitter/receiver, LED video light, moisture resistant construction and all for around £200 cheaper than the Canon 600EX II-RT.



CANON MR 14EX II MACRO RING LITE

A ring flash is a specialist lighting tool for images with a low-contrast look. Designed primarily for macro photography, the circular flash head produces a flat, low shadow light, popular in high-key fashion portraiture, and introduces attractively shaped catchlights in the subject's eyes. This model is representative of most ring flash designs. It offers independently adjustable flash tubes and an LED modelling lamp, and can be controlled from the unit or a compatible Canon camera. Usefully, it is powered by AA batteries, and features TTL wireless functionality. Adaptor rings widen lens compatibility.



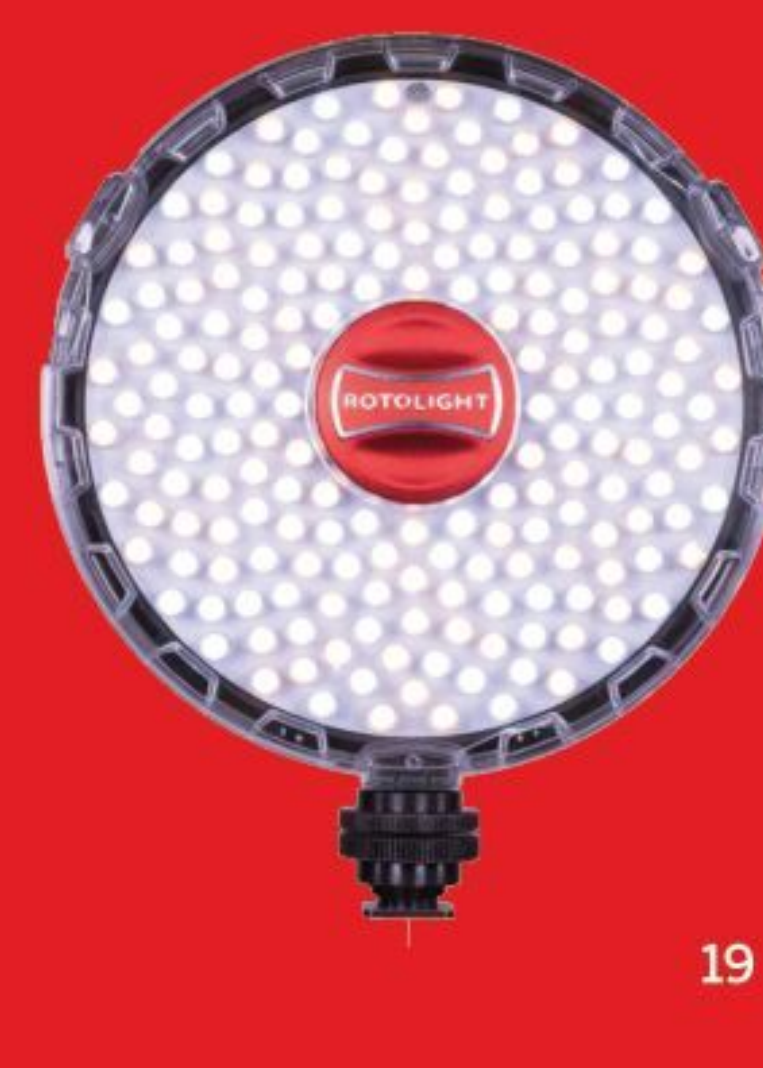
ELINCHROM D-LITE 4 RX

While speedlights provide the greatest portability and maximum compatibility with dedicated same-brand cameras, they have limited power and spread. The Elinchrom D-Lite 4 RX is an ideal first strobe, providing a usable output, but in a compact design – perfect for small studios. It offers full integration with the Skyport wireless system, so can be triggered via a dedicated transmitter, but is also fitted with an optical cell. With the Skyport app, the user can control settings from a smartphone, speeding up lighting adjustments and shoot efficiency. It's an affordable light around which you can build your new business.



ROTOLIGHT NEO 2

An alternative option to flash is a continuous light source. The Rotolight system offers a portable solution. The NEO 2 is made from a panel of LED bulbs, which can be varied in their power and colour temperature, allowing dynamic lighting. With a maximum output of 1032 lumens, the photographer has control over blending natural and artificial light. Having both continuous and flash light sources in a single unit makes the Rotolight NEO 2 versatile for both stills and video work. For location lighting, it is perfect for matching additional light to the colour of the environmental illumination, suggesting it as an alternative for mobile photographers.



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GET MORE FROM YOUR

DSLR

Discover unused potential in your digital camera and learn to capture images you may never have thought possible

We often purchase a new camera for a specific purpose and with a clear idea of how it will benefit our photography. Whether we are upgrading to a DSLR from a compact or bridge camera, or moving up to a model with a more professional specification, we will undoubtedly be excited by those features that are most obviously dedicated to our main photographic interests. While this might help us make informed decisions about which camera model is best suited to our needs, there is a notable downside. While we are focusing on utilising those tools, we often overlook the many other advanced features found on our DSLR, meaning there is potential for unique images that we fail

to exploit. Successive cameras often build on the specification of their predecessors, so that latest-generation iterations have extensive menus and custom functions.

This is most often the case in enthusiast-level cameras, which are pitched to appeal to photographers experimenting with numerous genres, and it is easy for features to get lost and underused. Aside from the obvious negative impact this has on our portfolio, it also means we are not efficiently operating our equipment – we have paid for components that we may never use. It is therefore good practice to revisit our cameras, even after several years of using it, to discover which aspects we may have been missing out on. Once you have discovered a

'new' feature, you can try to work it into your usual workflow, learning to use it in a novel or unconventional way.

The advantages of knowing your own camera well are wide reaching. Firstly, understanding how every feature works and how these are laid out across the controls, i.e. the manufacturer's design philosophy, will make your shooting experience feel more intuitive. You will then be better prepared for whatever challenges your shoot raises. Secondly, discovering a new tool at your disposal is a guaranteed way to ignite your creative motivation, encouraging you to try new techniques and learn new skills. Read the following guide to find out how to start using your DSLR like never before.

GET MORE FROM YOUR DSLR

**Take your
photography further**

Modern digital cameras are highly advanced pieces of technology, capable of many visual effects and functions.

Learning to use every feature is the best way to grow as a photographer

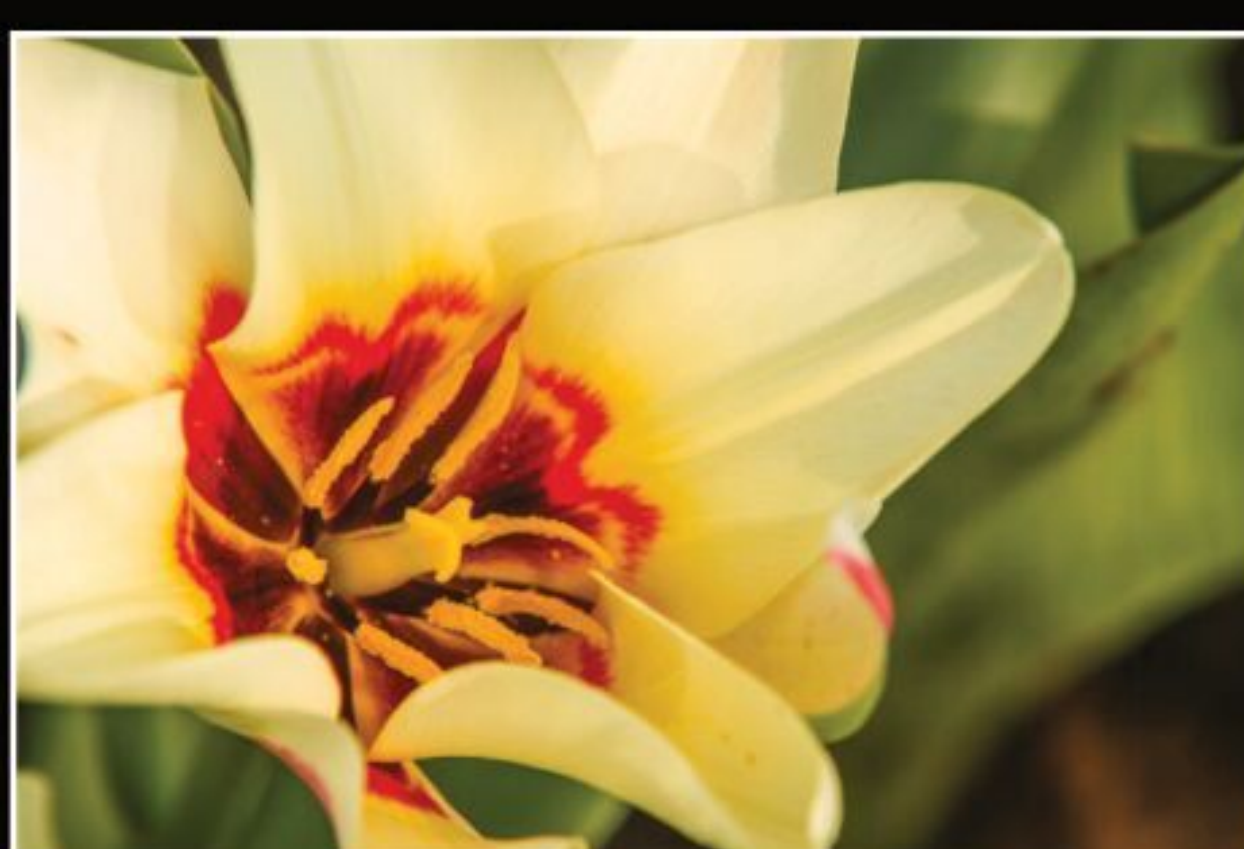
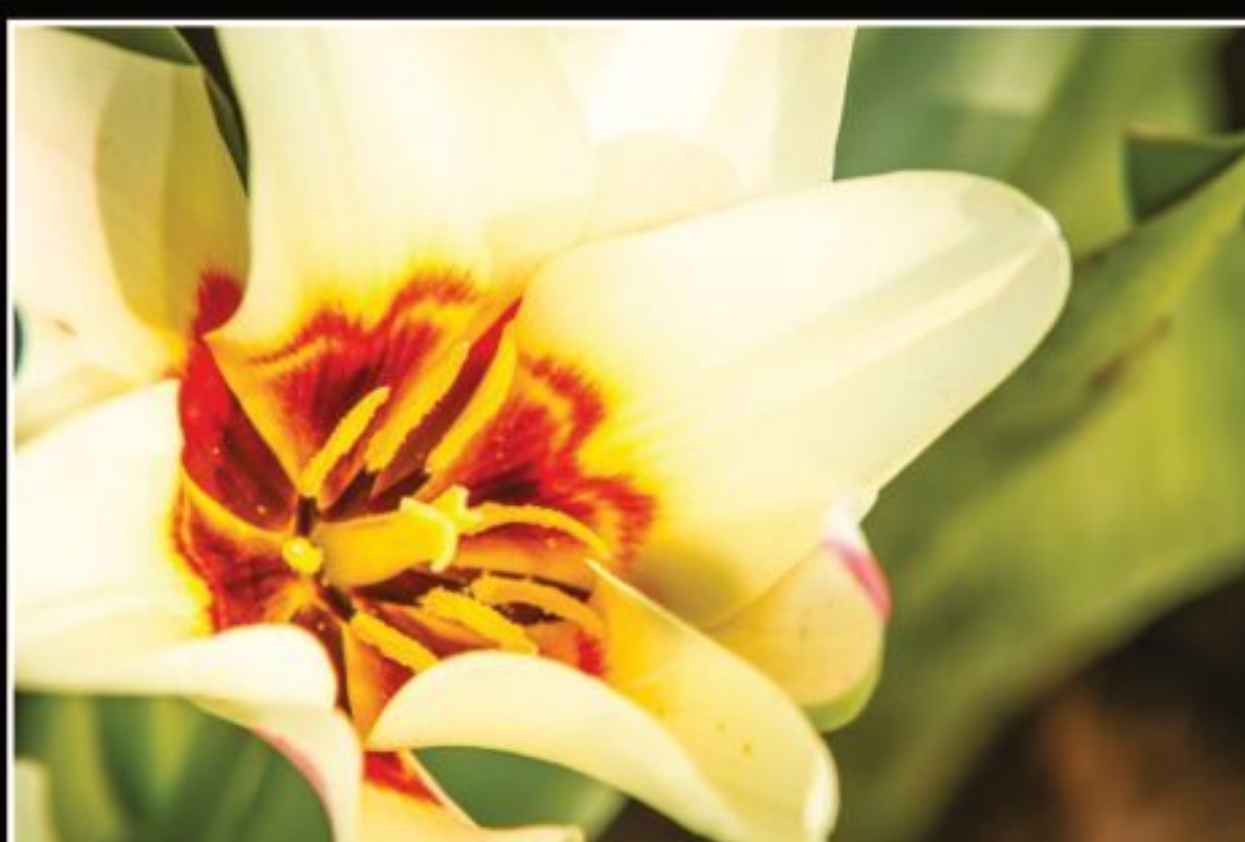
© Vladimir Kochkin



Diffuse your flash

Light modifiers are less plentiful for built-in flashes, but there are some handy options available

Diffusion domes are common for flashguns, but these can be difficult to find for pop-up variants. Try a universal internal flash 'softbox', which can be found inexpensively online or alternatively, craft one yourself from a piece of white plastic or semi-translucent material.



Top
Undiffused flash

Without any form of diffusion, the small direct flash creates hard-edged light that does not flatter the delicate nature of the subject

Bottom
Softer spread

Once the light has passed through a diffuser, the light is more evenly distributed, resulting in a better feathered flash exposure

MAKE THE MOST OF INTERNAL FLASH

While not the first choice for photographers requiring advanced lighting effects, built-in flash can be a valuable and versatile asset

Built-in flash has somewhat of a bad reputation amongst serious photographers, who often do not feel it is flexible enough for regular professional use. It is true that external flashguns provide lighting that is easier to work with and that internal units have their limitations. The light from these flashes is known for being harsher, due mainly to their small size, which results in a limited spread of light. The softness of flash light is directly related to the size of the source, resulting in built-in flash producing a harder light 'hotspot'. Furthermore, the majority of integral units cannot be angled in any way, instead directing the light straight at the subject. Therefore, unlike with speedlights, which can be angled to bounce flash off a wall or ceiling, it is easy to create an unflattering bleached look to skin, with patchy blown highlights. In addition, it is difficult to produce genuinely directional lighting, for which off-camera flash can be used to enhance texture or structure in the subject. There is also the

matter of limited control – speedlights usually provide full customisation of the flash power and output, to easily blend flash light with the ambient light in the scene. Since this is not possible with integral units, it can be difficult to avoid flash falloff.

However, these weaknesses aside, there are benefits to be found with your DSLR's internal flash. Firstly, internal flashes are always present and are powered by the main camera battery, meaning it is impossible to leave for a shoot without a flash or for the batteries to run out of power. Beyond this, professional speedlights are large and heavy, so there are weight-saving advantages when travelling. It is possible to adjust flash output to some degree and there are options for diffusing light from your flash, however the greatest method of expanding its usefulness is to use it as a wireless trigger for same-brand external devices. Either way, it is advantageous to know how to make the flash on your camera truly useful.



Use flash exposure compensation

Take control of the brightness of your flash for a seamless blend with ambient light

While it may not be possible to adjust flash output manually in the same way as on dedicated flash units, you can 'turn down' the presence of flash in your shots using flash exposure compensation. If the flash light overpowers natural or ambient light, use negative compensation to reduce the flash effect, relative to overall exposure. This reduces the harsh lighting associated with internal flash and makes its use for fill flash far more practical.



Top right Overpowering

At its default setting the internal flash used here is too bright, and as such has introduced flash falloff and produced an unsightly dark background

Right A better balance

By using a setting of -3EV flash exposure compensation, the overall exposure remains the same, but flash output has been adjusted. The light now blends smoothly with the environment



2x © Mike Tully

Control external units

Extend your flash shot flexibility by triggering speedlights, without investing in expensive third-party transmitters



1 Locate flash control menu Activate your built-in flash and then navigate to the dedicated flash settings menu on your camera LCD. At this stage, place your external flash on a light stand, or attach a flash stand to the base of the flash, then place it on a flat surface.



2 Set flash command mode To get your internal flash to 'speak' to the flash units, you'll have to activate the command mode. From the flash control menu, set wireless command to On. You may have the option to keep fill flash functionality from the internal unit.



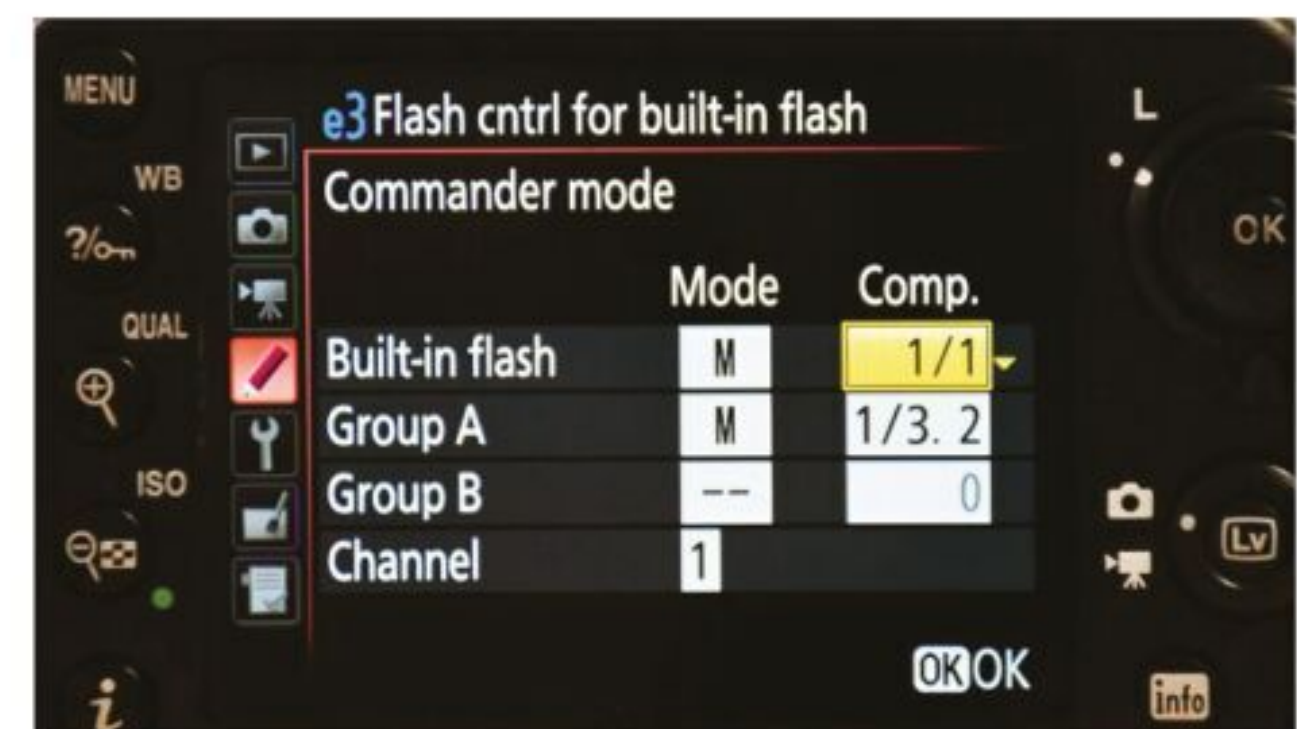
3 Set speedlight as slave On the external flash unit, use the LCD to scroll through modes and choose Slave Mode. The on-camera flash will now act as a master, triggering the speedlight when the shutter is fired. Ensure good line of sight between the camera and flash.



4 Choose a channel Assign a channel to your flash and ensure this corresponds with the currently selected channel on your camera. This will ensure your flash will be triggered correctly and your work won't be disrupted by other photographers working nearby, when shooting an event for example.



5 Select a flash group If you are using more than one flash and would like to control them all separately, assign them to groups. This provides the flexibility to have flashes fire independently and to have different power settings for each (such as when shooting with front, rim and hair lights, for example).



6 Control flash output When using dedicated flashes – those made by the same manufacturer as your camera – it is almost always possible to control flash output wirelessly, directly from your camera. Select a group and adjust power to vary light produced by each of your external devices.

CUSTOMISE YOUR CAMERA BODY

Not all features are set up perfectly by default. Revise handling for intuitive camera operation

When you buy a camera, it is set up using default factory settings, since the manufacturer is making the product for a full range of photographers with differing needs. While this is useful for general-purpose shooting, it is not conducive to creative images or operation outside of normal photographic situations. Luckily, this can be corrected with relative ease, through the customisation of control layouts and functionality. However, more difficult to address is the generalised design of most DSLRs, which is also influenced by the expected handling by the 'average' user. The proportions of a camera body make shooting in landscape orientation as comfortable as possible, working on the assumption that most photos will be taken in that way (since the imaging sensor is fixed in this position). When shooting at an unusual angle or in portrait format, this can be problematic, and can present a unique set of compositional challenges. Furthermore, each subject demands a tailored shooting style. In wildlife photography, for example,

different animals vary in their behaviour and therefore the photographer must adjust how they focus, meter and compose their shots. When considering these challenges, it is imperative that camera handling becomes instinctive and that the photographer can access settings and features, without having to take their eye away from the viewfinder. Any camera properties that slow the handling process will act to increase the number of missed shots. Setting up your camera to work for you, rather than the inverse, is a valuable mindset. Learn the strengths and weaknesses of your gear, so you can predict where it will introduce difficulties and devise workarounds. Make use of user-defined shooting modes, where you can save and access most-used camera settings, to speed up how you adapt to changing conditions. Don't be afraid to experiment with preset 'scene' modes in rapid situations – while not as controllable, they are useful alternatives to manual shooting, where you want to concentrate less on the technical aspects of exposure and more on framing, focusing and capturing your subject.

Use viewfinder grid lines

Turn on the optional digital grid line display in your viewfinder, to make it easier to judge when the horizon is straight, even with the camera raised to your eye. This will also help you recognise when wide-angle and perspective distortions have become an image-degrading issue.

Personalise button layout

Tailor the functionality of your camera controls to better fit your preferred shooting style

Enthusiast-level cameras possess far more features than they do physical controls, meaning that the default functions of the body's buttons and dials are essentially a suggested layout by the manufacturer. It is possible to re-assign these to operate most-used features and to reorganise handling, to be more logical to the user. This speeds up camera work in fast-paced situations, permitting fewer missed images and a more enjoyable shoot. Follow these steps to get started.



1 Locate custom functions On the majority of cameras, button function assignment is done from within the Custom Function menu. On this Nikon camera, there is a sub-menu which provides direct access to control layout options.



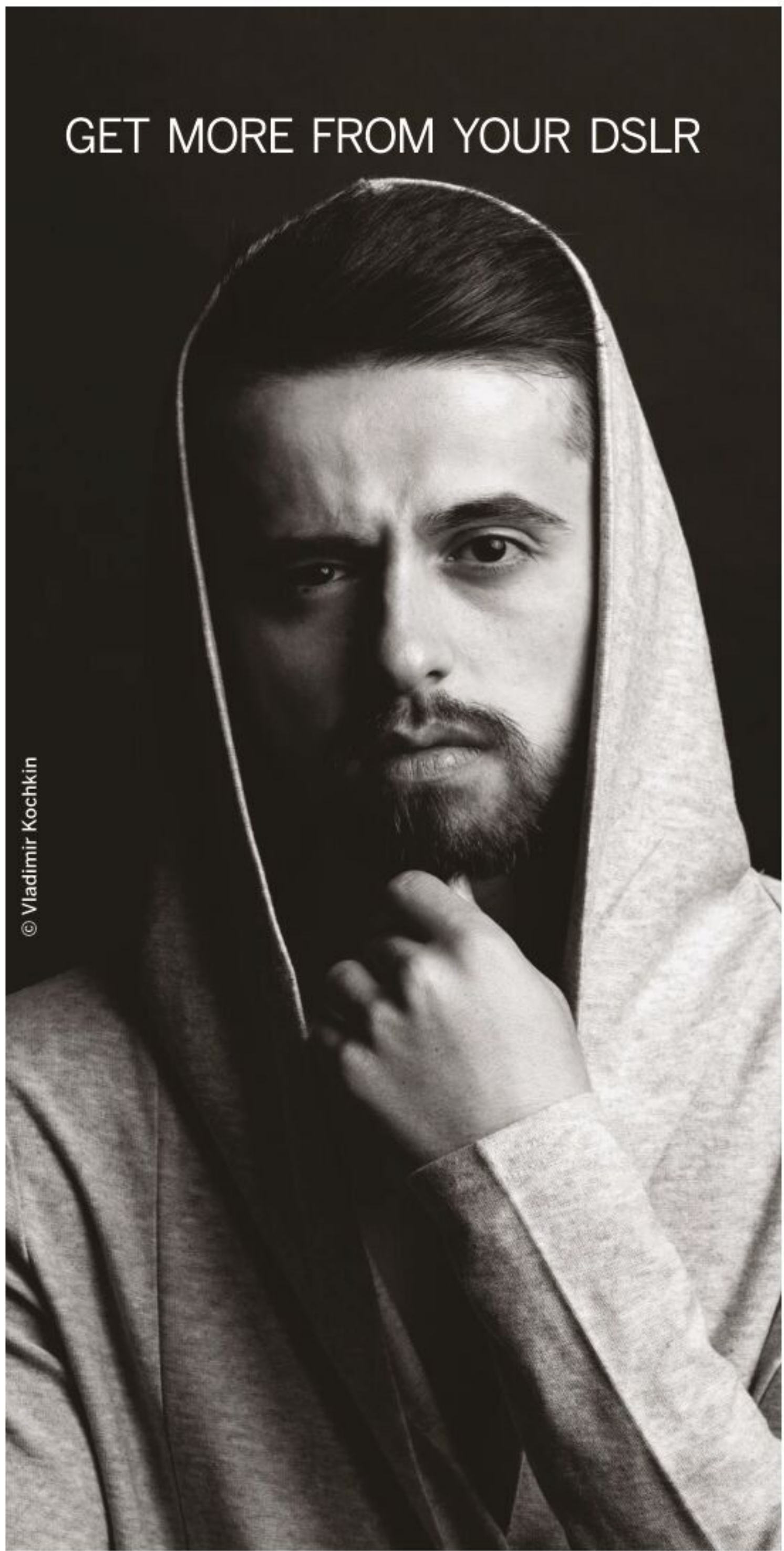
2 Use function buttons Many camera models feature additional buttons dedicated to the assignment of user-defined functions. Select a button in the camera menu and choose a function to which you would like one-touch access.



3 Choose command dial operation Decide what you would like the front and back control wheels to operate. This may be the standard aperture or shutter speed setting, or you may opt to deactivate a dial to avoid accidental alterations.



© Vladimir Kochkin



© Vladimir Kochkin

GET MORE FROM YOUR DSLR

Left
On-shoot freedom
 Having your camera set up so that it is aligned with your style will prevent interruptions to your creative thought process

Above
Your free camera
 Analyse what your main 'complaints' are during your shoots and see how your camera can be adapted through customisation

Use a battery grip

Introducing improved handling in addition to extra power, battery grips represent a good investment

The second battery slot provided by a battery grip extends shooting possibilities in multiple ways. Most obviously, the power advantages are a major benefit, especially when away from a power outlet for long periods. However, many portrait photographers buy them for the vertical handgrip and second shutter button that they may feature. This enables the user to rotate the camera and shoot more comfortably in portrait orientation, without having to adopt a different shooting posture.



1 Unfamiliar and unstable Without a grip, portrait orientation requires photographers to stretch their hand to reach the shutter button – uncomfortable on longer shoots.



2 Natural handling Battery grips can help to provide a method of shooting portrait-format images in the same way as when shooting in landscape, extending your shooting opportunities.

Customise AF sensitivity

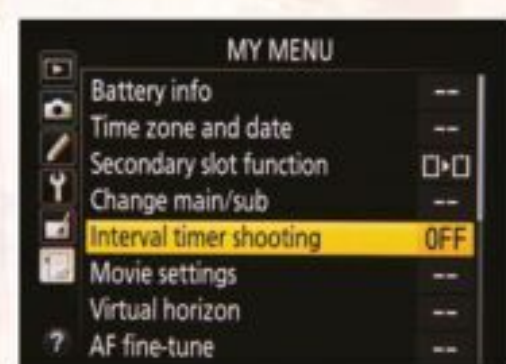
For photographing fast-moving subjects, continuous autofocus can be used to track it, maintaining a focus lock. However, a potential downside to using this mode is that objects within the frame can confuse the AF system into re-adjusting focus incorrectly. Use the Custom Function menu to reduce its sensitivity to novel objects entering the scene, to limit the risk of losing focus on your intended subject. This is especially applicable in low-light or low-contrast lighting conditions.



© Peter Fenech

Use built-in intervalometers

Photographer Neil Van Niekerk (neilvn.com) explains how to shoot timelapse sequences without additional accessories



1 Activate your interval timer

Navigate to the function menu and turn the interval timer

'On'. I keep the intervalometer setting as a shortcut in the My Menu page on my camera. With a clear idea of what we want to achieve, this intervalometer isn't an intimidating menu.



2 Set interval

In this example, we calculated that we would need a four-second interval for the

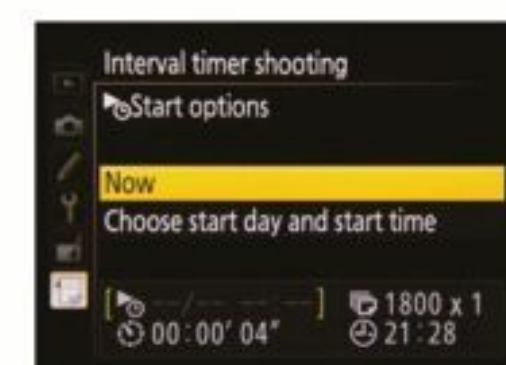
current shoot. You must remember to set an appropriate shutter speed, which will ideally be three seconds for fluid movement, in this case.



3 Select number of images

Choose the number of images to shoot. If we are sure of an exact

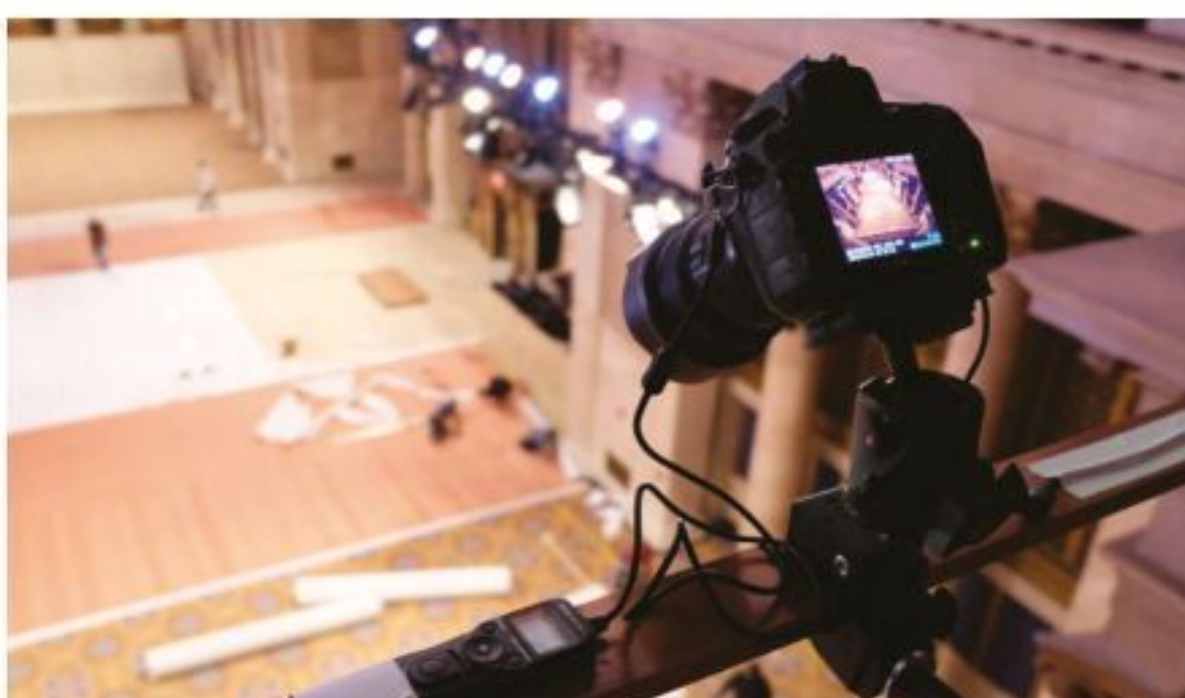
value (as dictated by the duration of the event we are shooting), then we can set it here. Otherwise, set a random number and stop the camera when necessary.



4 Start your sequence

You can choose to start the sequence immediately, or set it

to start at a future date and time. Simply enter these parameters and the camera will automatically begin shooting at your preset interval and for the designated frame count.



Know your limits

Sometimes you may need an external interval timer – here the number of required images exceeded the maximum possible in-camera



DISCOVER UNUSED CAMERA FEATURES

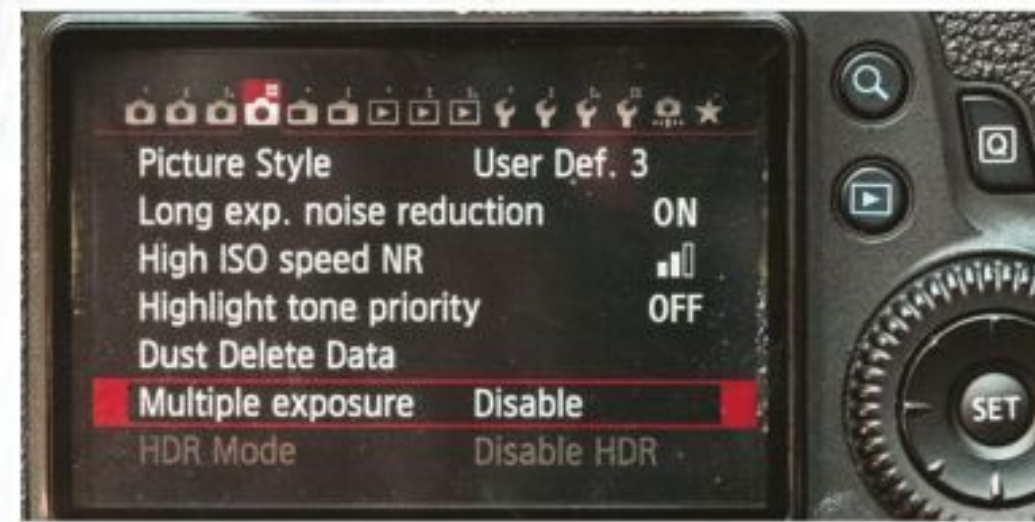
Delve into your camera menu and broaden your image portfolio by putting under-utilised functions to work

Although we may think we know our cameras inside and out, there are likely to be many features and functions that we simply do not use in everyday photography work. Cameras have an abundance of features we wrongly assume will not be useful for our photographic interests but which, with a little experimentation, can reveal new ways to create distinctive images and refresh our portfolio. These range from internal hardware and software tools, to effect filters and exposure modes. While the term in-camera 'special effects' may not seem appealing

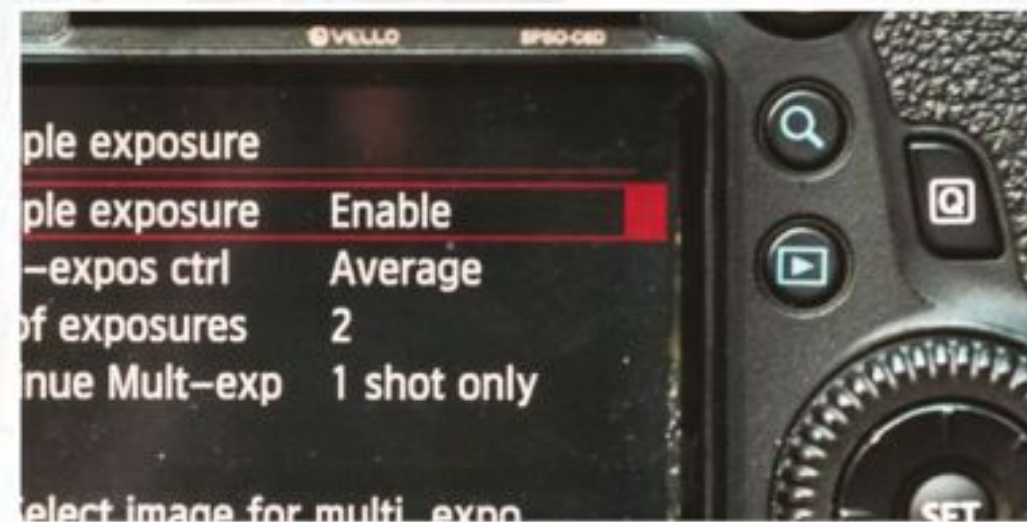
for serious assignments, on reflection many of us strive to create similar looks at the processing stage, in Photoshop. On today's DSLRs, there are multiple options for using built-in effect tools to shoot niche images. There are several ways these 'new' features can improve a photographer's work. The most evident of these is the new styles that can be added to our repertoire, as we are encouraged to try new genres or work with new subject matter. Beyond this however, it is possible to find new ways to develop our usual work, often using a function to ease our workload

Create multiple exposures

Leonardo Mascaro (leonardomascaro.com) explains how to create this popular effect in-camera, free from Photoshop



1 Activate multiple exposure mode Explore your camera's function menu and locate the built-in multiple exposure mode. While there is some variation between different manufacturers, this is often found in the shooting menu on your DSLR, or in the Custom Functions tab.



2 Select frame count After enabling, adjust how many frames you want to combine and how they are going to be combined. The difference between effects will vary depending on the subject you're shooting, so it's best to try them all and see which works best for you.



3 Plan your image Even in the digital world, I recommend trying to create the final image in your mind before pressing the shutter. Consider how many images you are planning to blend and what result you are trying to achieve. Check camera settings and take the first shot.



4 Shoot your second image Choose from two options. You can shoot the second frame looking through the viewfinder, trying to imagine where and how this second image will blend with the previous one. Or, use the LCD screen to frame the second one, having the first shot still visible on the display.



5 Review and reshoot After the second picture, the camera will take a few seconds and you'll be able to see the final result. Your camera won't always create the exact image you had in mind, but a lot of times it will surprise you with something interesting, so it's worth experimenting.



6 Perfect your shot Once you've seen the blended image, consider alternative compositions and try varying the number of frames used to make the final photograph. Don't forget to check essential aspects like sharpness, exposure and focus in all of the component images.

© Leonardo Mascaro

© Leonardo Mascaro

or capture a style in fewer shooting steps. Exploring our camera menus can reveal tools to help us cross genres, such as merging use of HD video with timelapse photography – two related, but perhaps as yet unexplored, areas.

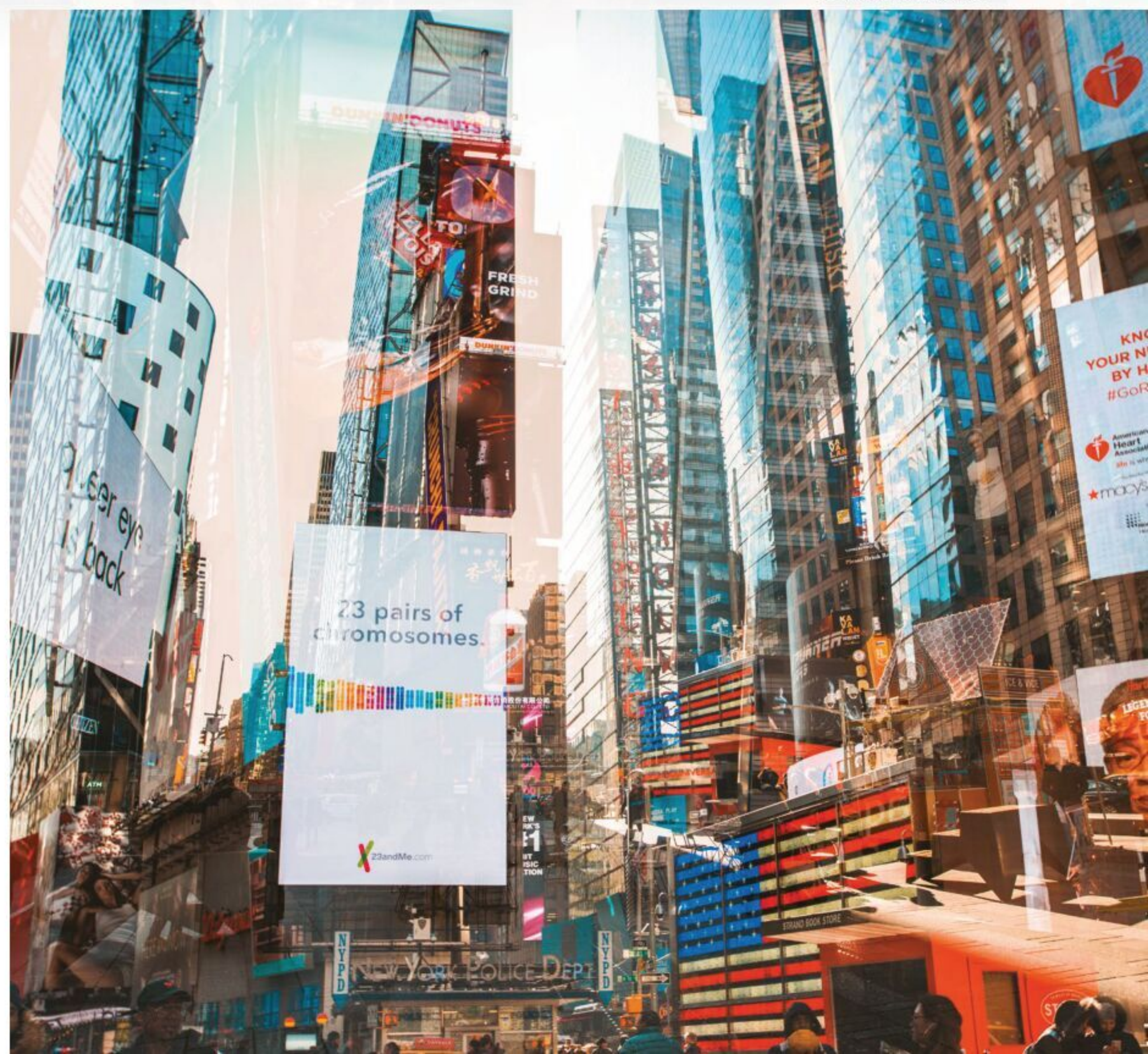
A further advantage to using our camera specification to the full is that it provides the opportunity to put underused items in our kit bag back to work, as we seek new types of images. It is also worth considering less-conspicuous devices, such as advanced in-camera image preferences. If you plan to perform post-processing in a particular editing suite, try presetting a more appropriate colour space in-camera – ProPhoto RGB for Lightroom or sRGB for online display, for example – to cut down on editing time. Time saving is a great area to concentrate on, as there are often a huge number of ways cameras can be used to speed up shooting and sorting images. If you own a high-spec DSLR, why not use the built-in microphone to automatically add audio notes to an image?

Top left Creative and colourful

Looking beyond the usual shooting parameters of a DSLR camera can unlock enormous opportunities for artistic photography

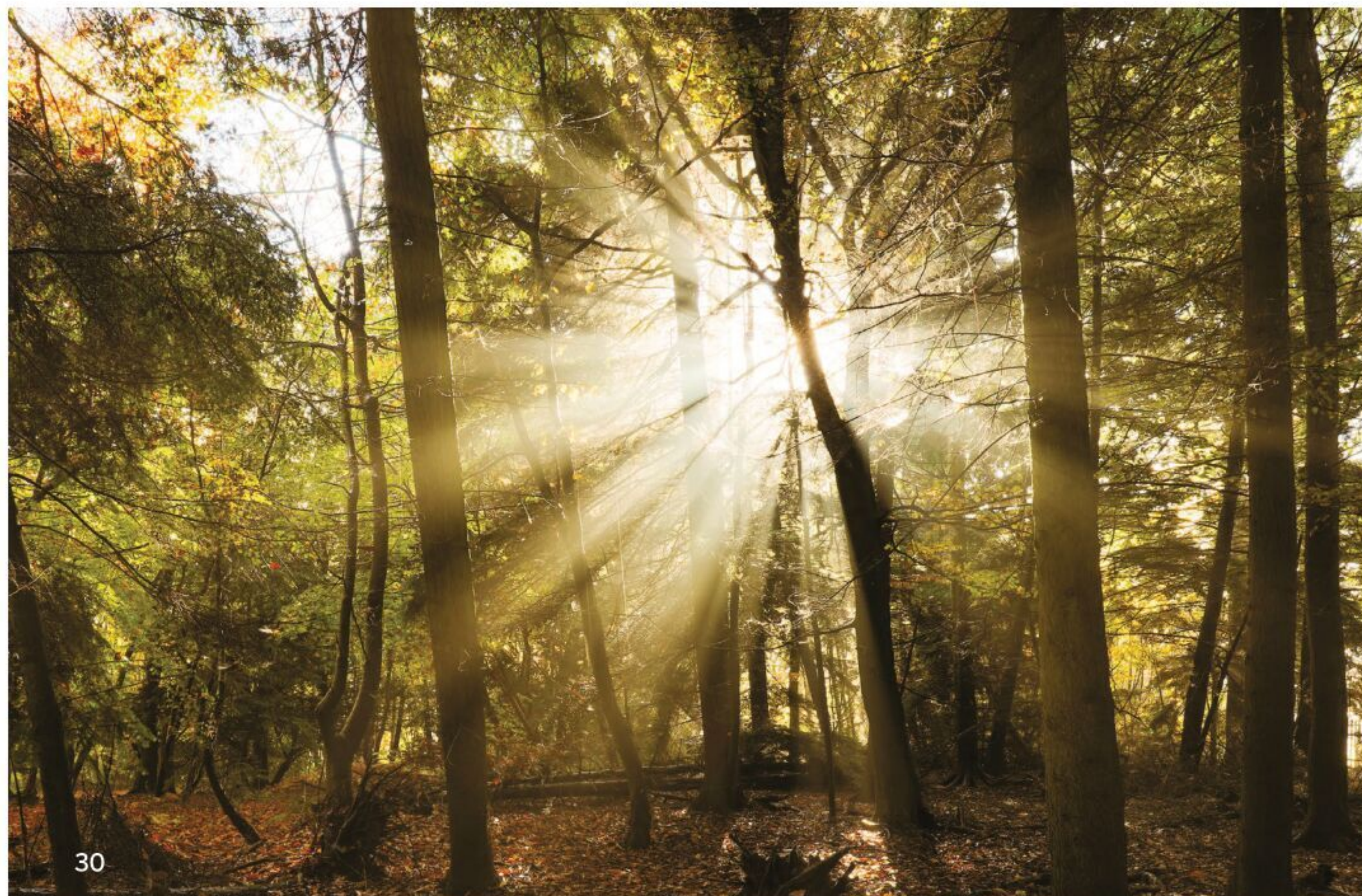
Abstract interest

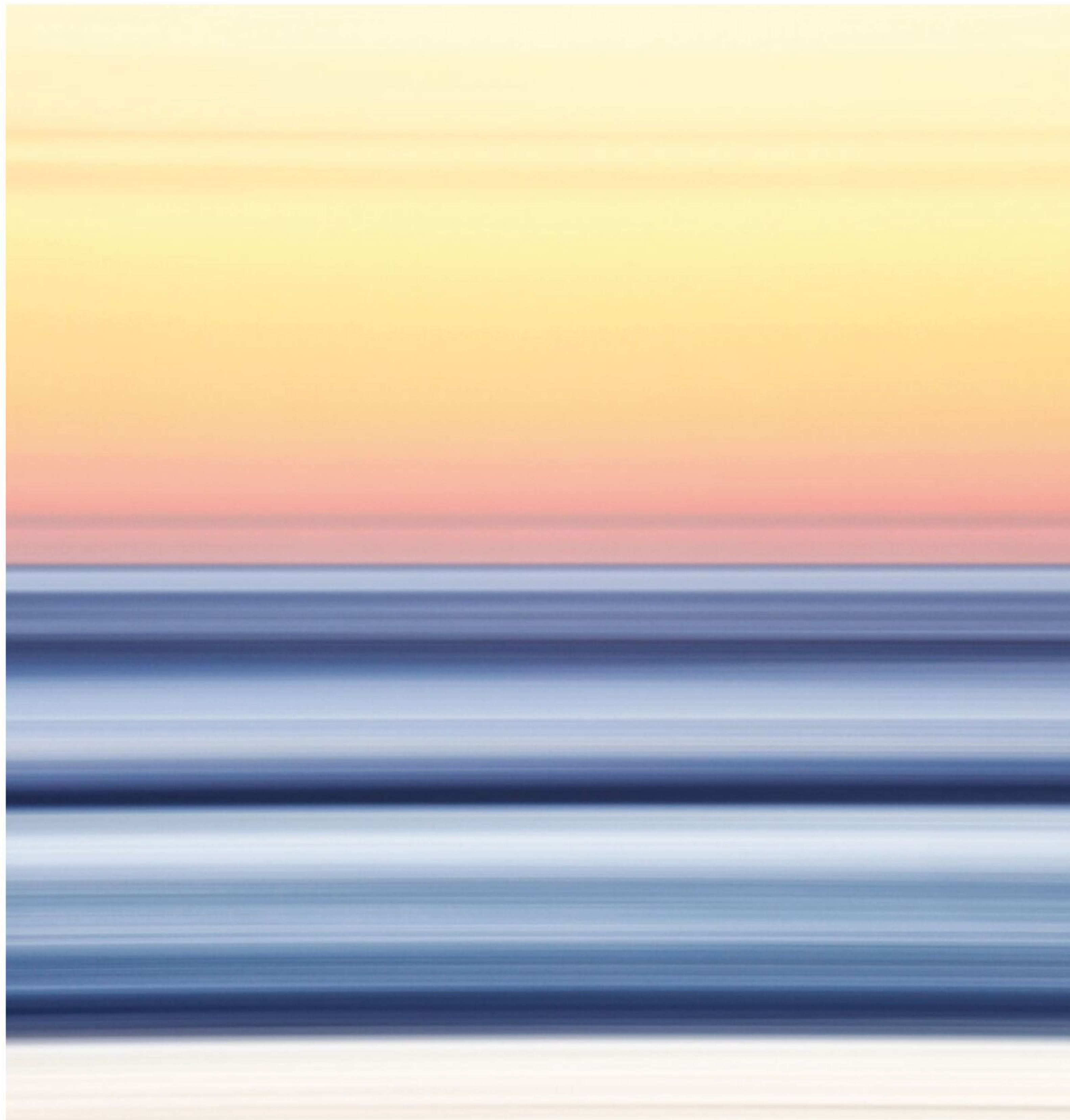
By shooting multiple exposures at the camera, rather than at the computer, better control over exposure and composition is permitted, while saving time at the post-processing stage and streamlining workflow. The technique will also be more familiar to photographers who previously worked with film



PRO WAYS TO SHOOT *PHOTO* PROJECTS

Running out of inspiration? Lee Frost advises on how to seek out and undertake a new project



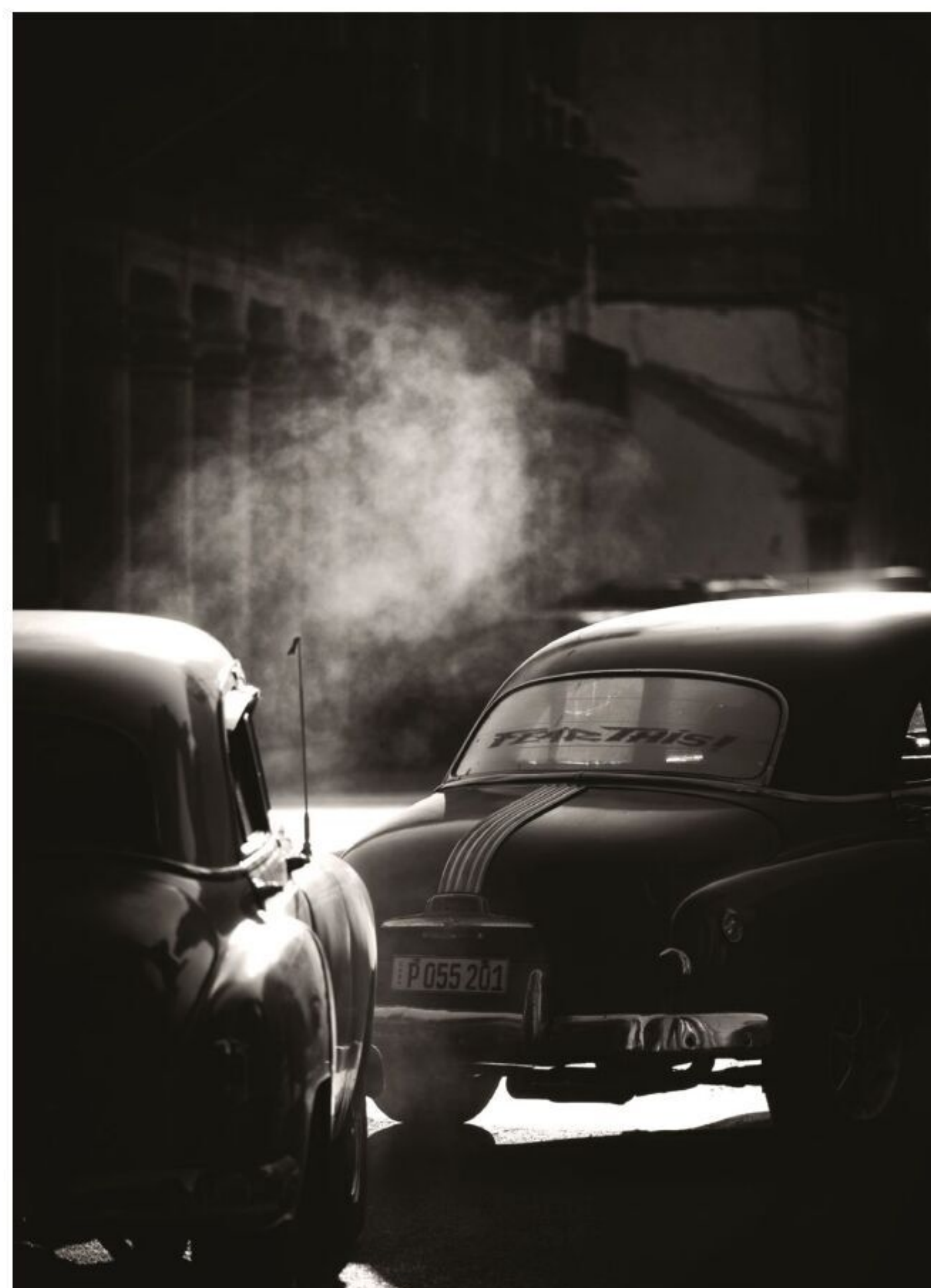


It happens to us all at one time or another. We head out with a camera, intent on capturing some great images, only to return home with an empty memory card feeling deflated and frustrated. It's the photographic equivalent of writer's block. The light's okay, the location is interesting, you were feeling keen when you set off earlier that day, but then it's like someone flicks a switch and your inspiration disappears in an instant.

Some photographers see this as a sign that it's time to find another hobby, but when you used to be passionate about something and that passion fades, there's usually a simple explanation and an easy solution. In many cases it's down to boredom and familiarity. If you shoot the same subjects week-in, week-out and never try anything different, eventually you'll run out of creative steam.

One solution is to set yourself a personal project, so that when you do have time to take photographs, in the evenings or at the weekend, you have a purpose and can produce a cohesive body of work that focuses your enthusiasm and creative energy, instead of wandering around aimlessly in search of things to shoot.

Over the next few pages discover some photography project ideas to get your creative juices flowing.



All images © Lee Frost

GET INSPIRED

How do you decide on a subject for your project?

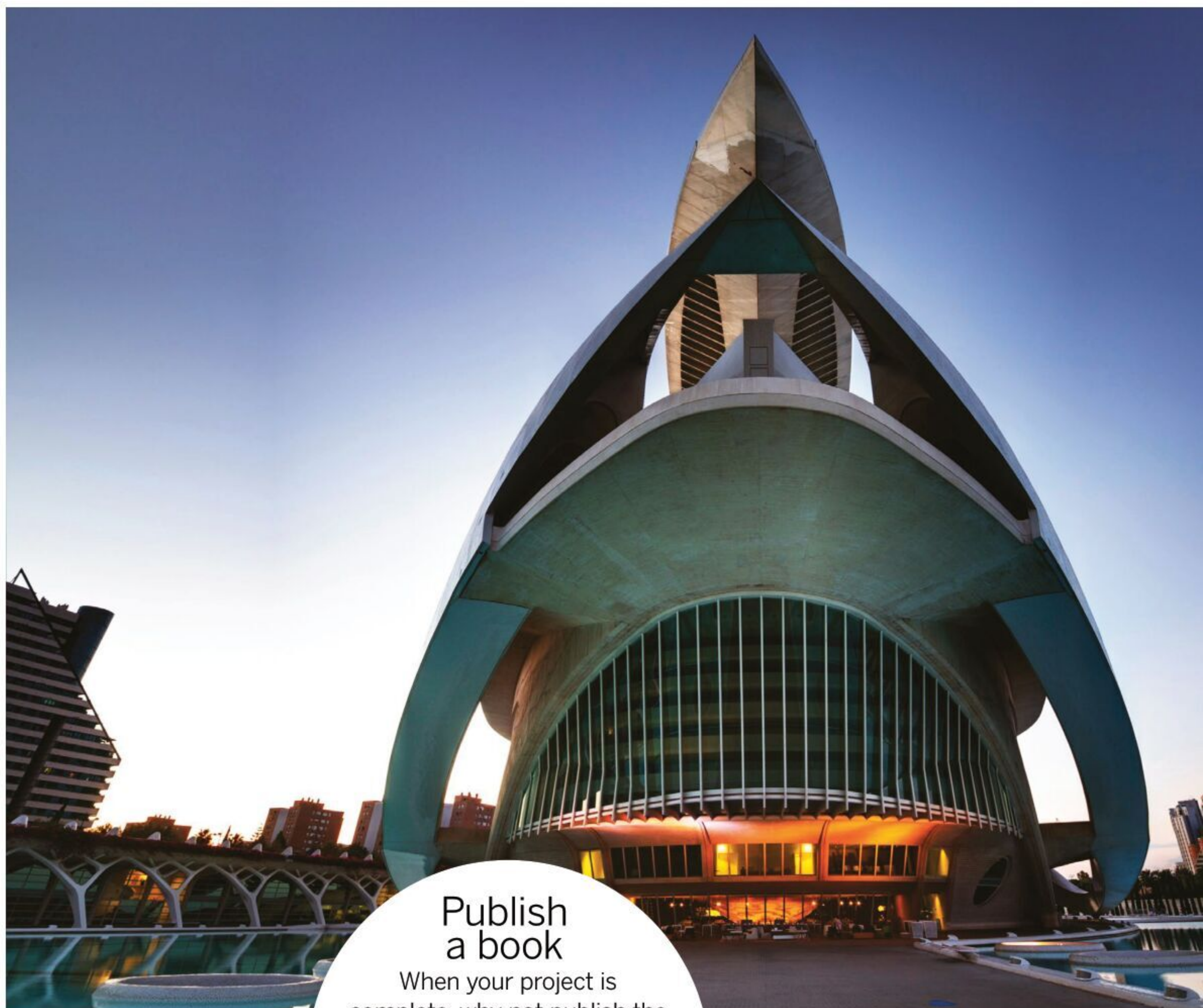
Photography is a funny old hobby when you think about it. We invest all this money in expensive equipment, spend years honing our skills both behind the camera and at the computer, get up ridiculously early, stay out half the night and travel the world in pursuit of great images – for what?

Having gone to great effort and expense, the photographs we produce often end up languishing on a computer hard drive, never to see the light of day again. A few may end up on social media, entered into club competitions, or shared with other photographers on sites such as Flickr or 500px. But the rewards for doing this rarely exceed the effort and many photographers eventually lose interest.

A personal project is a great way to keep you focused and inspired. It can cover anything you choose and can be as short or long term as you like. If you enjoy travel, you could buy a one-day return ticket to a town or city you've never visited before, turn up, spend a few hours wandering around taking photographs, and when you get back on the train to head home, that's the project over. Alternatively, you could go back to the same location – a town or city, a beach, an area of woodland – time after time for six months or a year and create a body of work.

Personal projects can also be subject- or technique-based. If you like shooting long exposures with a ten-stop ND filter, that could be the basis of a project – to shoot coastal locations or urban scenes. If you've had an old DSLR converted to infrared, why not set yourself a project to shoot old buildings in infrared in the spooky style of the late Sir Simon Marsden? Or how about photographing a town or city at night, when the streets are deserted, in black and white? Your home town would be ideal, partly because you live there so it's accessible, but also because once you start looking at it as a photographer instead of a resident, you'll see it in a completely different light – and find hidden gems that you'd ignored due to familiarity.

Ultimately, the subject of your project doesn't matter providing that you're interested in it. The aim of personal projects is to give yourself a purpose and motivation to pick up a camera when time permits and have a creative goal in mind.



Publish a book

When your project is complete, why not publish the work as a book? It's now viable to produce top-quality books at an affordable price by using Print On Demand (POD) publishers. One of the best-known is Blurb (www.blurb.co.uk).



Key considerations

The questions we should ask ourselves when starting a project

1 What am I interested in? Your project should be on a subject that interests you. Maybe you have a penchant for lighthouses, or classic cars, or a particular place or sport?

2 Do I want to travel? If your project is going to take you away from home you need to consider the cost and time implications – the more difficult and costly, the less likely you are to stick to it.

3 How long? Do you prefer short-term projects or something longer term? The answer will depend partly on your temperament. If you get bored quickly, stick to short and sweet projects.

4 How many images? Set yourself a goal of producing a certain number of images – 10, 20, 50. The number doesn't really matter, but don't make it too big as you may never get there.

5 Colour or black and white? The way you shoot will be influenced by whether the final images are going to be colour or black and white, so give it some thought before you get started.

6 Where should I start? With any project it's always a good idea to do some research before you start, especially if it's going to involve travel – where to go, when, how to get there, etc.

7 How can I come up with ideas? Songwriters often scribble thoughts and ideas in notebooks that can become the basis of a lyric. You can do exactly the same with your images.

8 What's my end goal for the project? If you have a website or use social media, they could be the answer. Also consider putting on an exhibition or self-publishing a book.

9 How do I stay inspired? Don't set yourself a project that's too easy, otherwise you'll probably lose interest. Stretch yourself creatively, in order to help yourself grow as a photographer.

10 What next? Before you complete one project, start thinking about another one that can follow it, so you don't end up with nothing to work on.



Top left

The Opera House

Cities at night make fantastic projects as there's so much subject variety. This shot was taken in Valencia's amazing City of Arts and Sciences

Left

The Oculus

New York City's magnificent new transportation hub – you could shoot a whole architectural or abstract project right there!

Above

Embleton Bay, Northumberland

If you're a landscape photographer, why not choose a beautiful location then return to it through the seasons to show how it changes over the course of a year?

Above top

The intimate landscape

This image is from a personal project shooting rock details on the coastline – a subject that photographs well no matter what the weather's doing

PROJECT 01

WORK CREATIVELY

Experiment with some artistic shooting techniques to produce a series of colourful abstract images

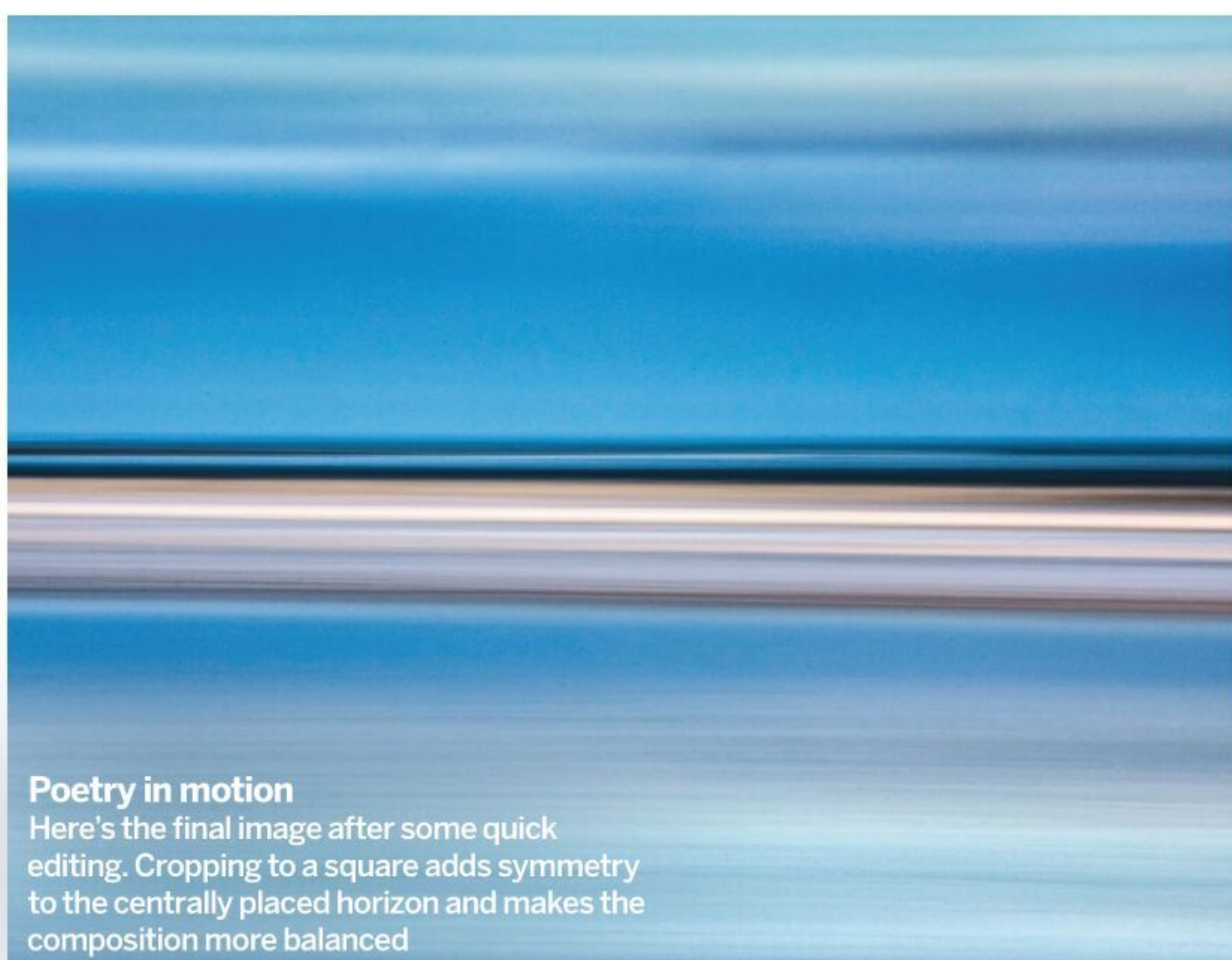
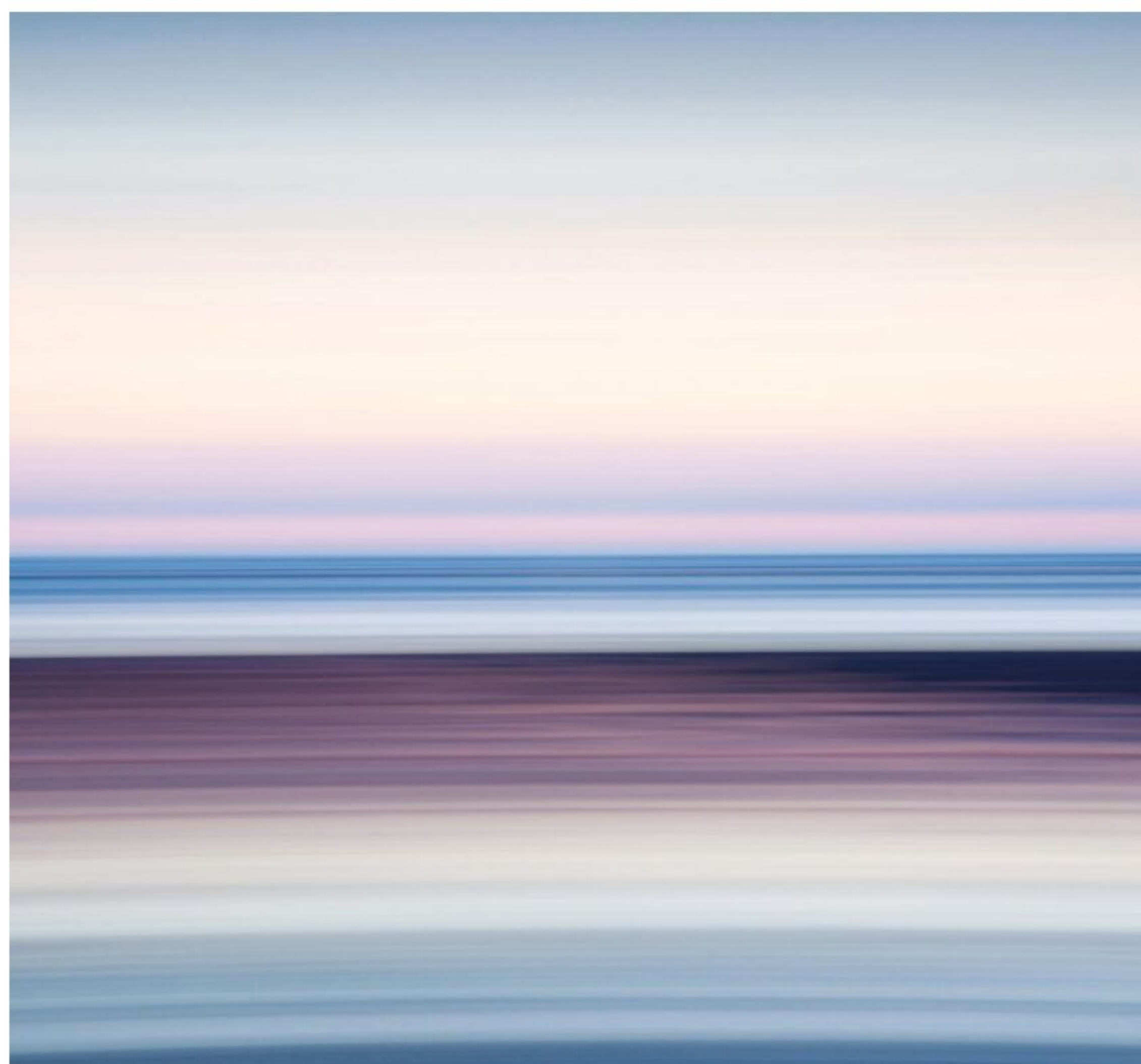
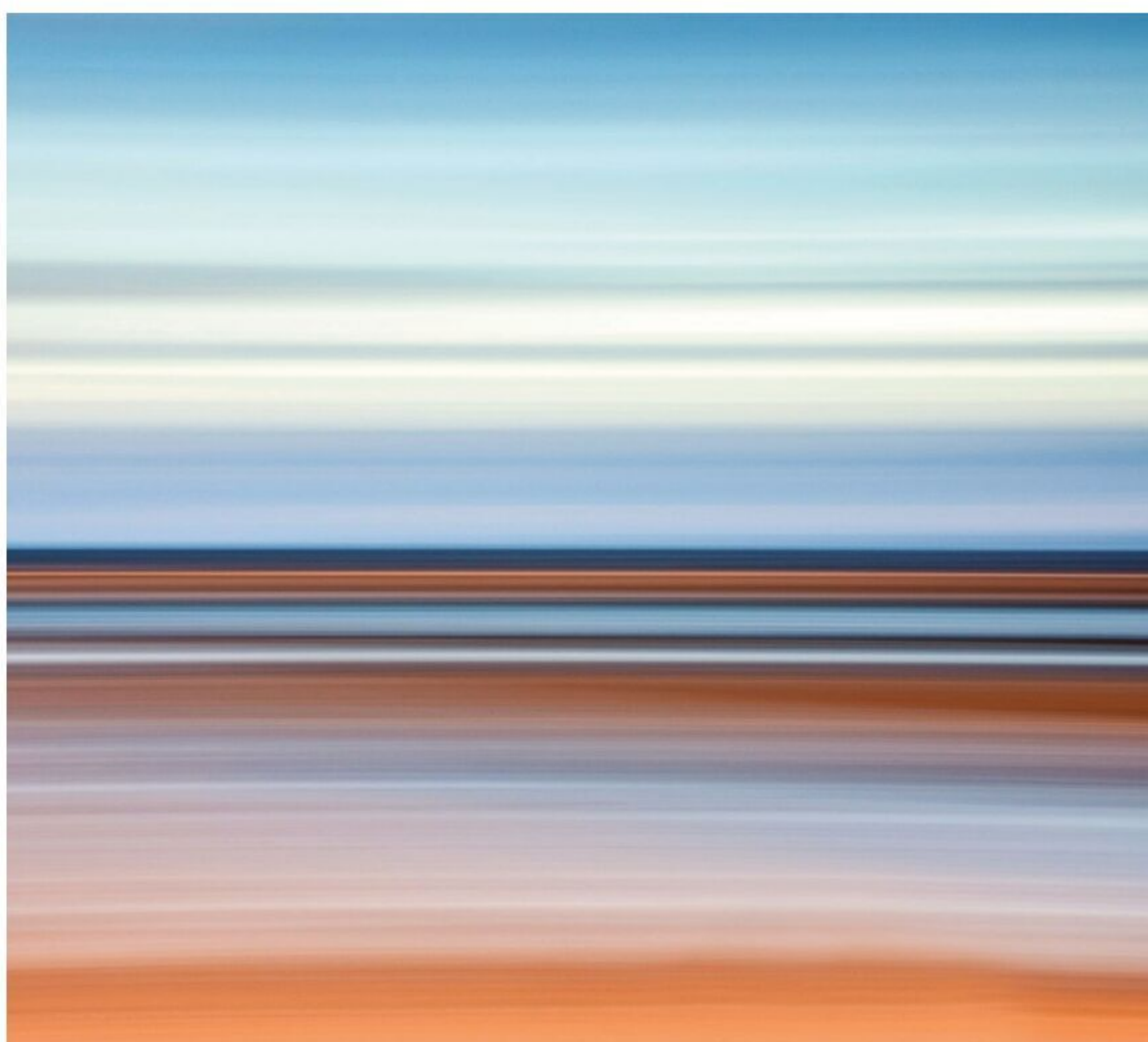
More often than not, landscape photographers set out to capture realistic images of a location. They strive to reveal the drama and beauty of a scene, shooting in great light and creating dynamic, wide-angle compositions so that the viewer feels like they could almost step into the photograph. You could base a personal project on choosing a specific scene then returning to it at different

times of day, in different weather conditions and seasons, and taking exactly the same shot from the same spot. However, after a while that's likely to get tedious, so how about throwing a creative technique into the mix?

One idea that's well worth trying is illustrated here – to use a simple panning technique and create colourful, abstract images that capture the sense of a place,

rather than a realistic interpretation of it. Sharp details and familiar features are reduced to blurred streaks, and all points of scale, reference and reassurance are removed.

Coastal scenes work well because they're already very simple and quite abstract, with three distinct bands created by the beach itself, the sea and the sky. All the images here were captured on the same beach on the



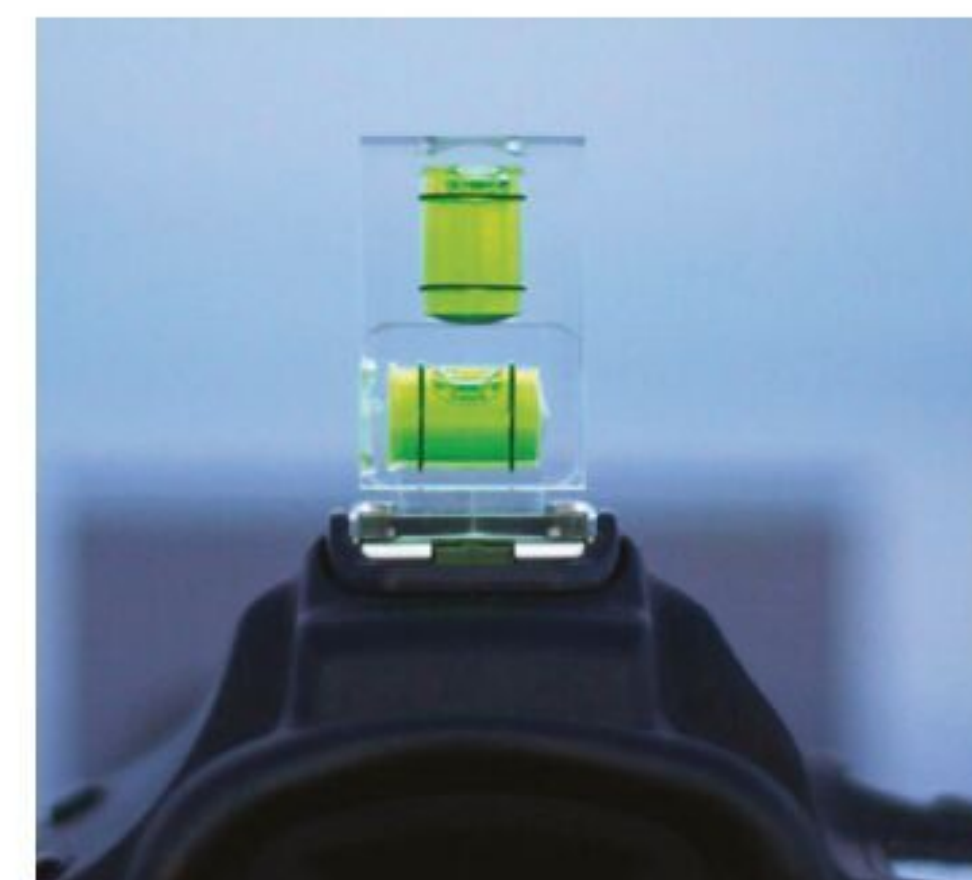
Poetry in motion

Here's the final image after some quick editing. Cropping to a square adds symmetry to the centrally placed horizon and makes the composition more balanced

Master panning techniques



1 Find a location Coastal views work well because there are defined bands of colour created by the beach, the sea and the sky. During spring, yellow oilseed rape against blue sky would work brilliantly. Same with poppy fields in the summer.



2 Level and square The camera needs to be perfectly level and square so you record parallel bands of colour. Use a hotshoe spirit level or your camera's internal electronic level. Also check the tripod head is level using its bull's eye bubble.

Northumberland coast. Other simple types of landscape scene also work well, such as fields of flowers – sunflowers, poppies, lavender, tulips and oilseed rape are some good examples – beneath blue sky.

The technique is somewhat hit-and-miss and open to individual creative interpretation, but it's great fun to try. Weather conditions totally dictate the look and mood of the final image, to the point that you could shoot the same

scene every day for a month, or even every hour during a single day, and no two will look the same.

On sunny days, sand glows orange while the sea and sky are blue. In stormy weather the whole scene becomes a study in shades of grey, while at dawn and dusk those greys become reds, yellows, purples and pinks.

Experimentation is the key for this type of creative project – try different shutter speeds and different rates of panning and just go with the flow. There is no right or wrong!

You've been framed

These coastal abstract images look great mounted, framed and hung on the wall. Maybe hang two, three or four together. If you've got a printer you can make your own prints to size.

Far left

Beach colours

This was the first image in the series. The blues of the sky and orange of the sand make a great colour

Middle left

At dusk

The blues and purples in this image were created by shooting at dusk, when the daylight was fading

Middle right

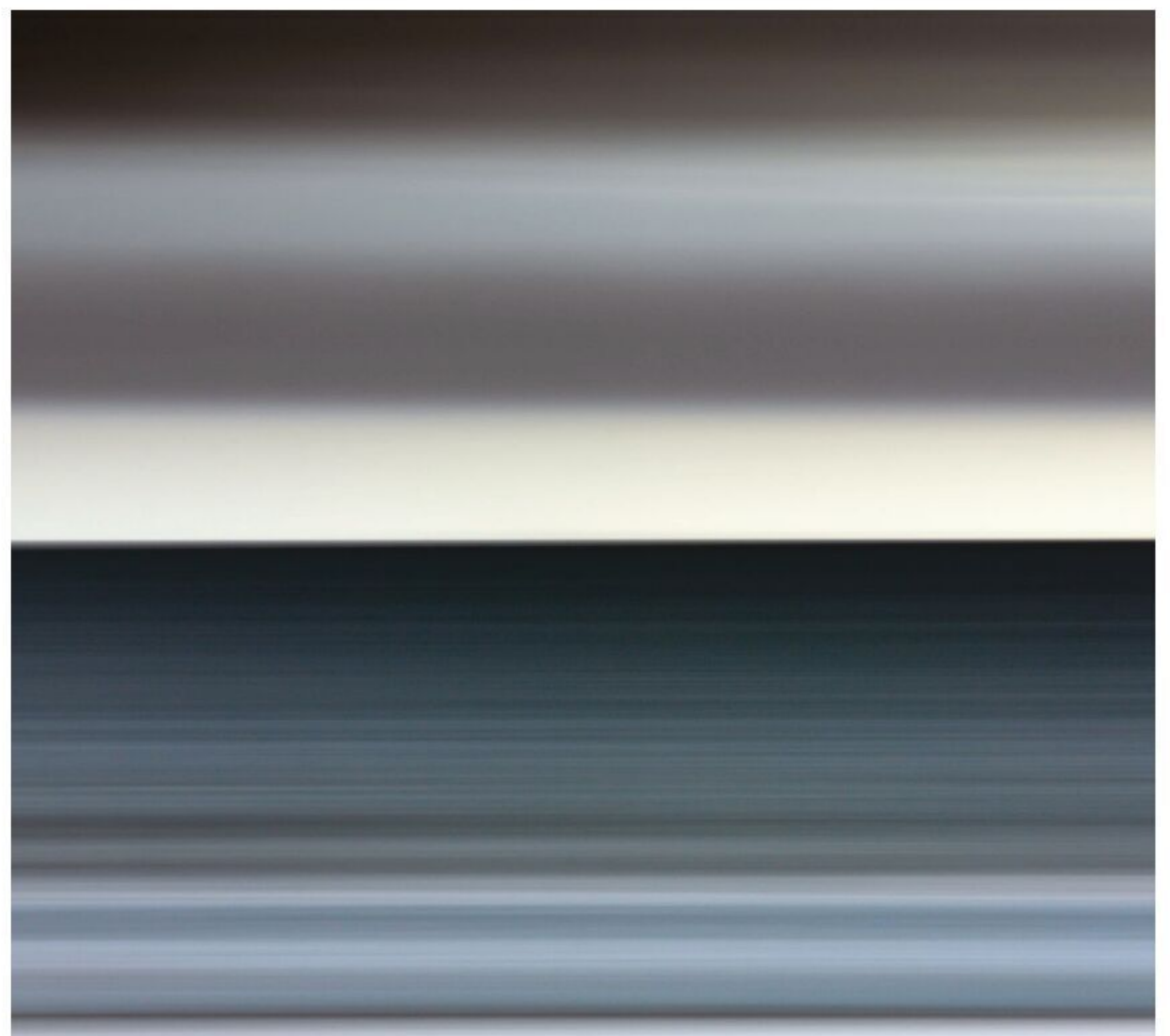
Sunrise

As the beach is on the east coast, the sun rises over the sea, adding a rich orange glow to the sky

Far right

Stormy conditions

On a stormy day the coastline takes on a totally different persona



Discover the simple process for creating a distinct collection of images with an abstract sense of place



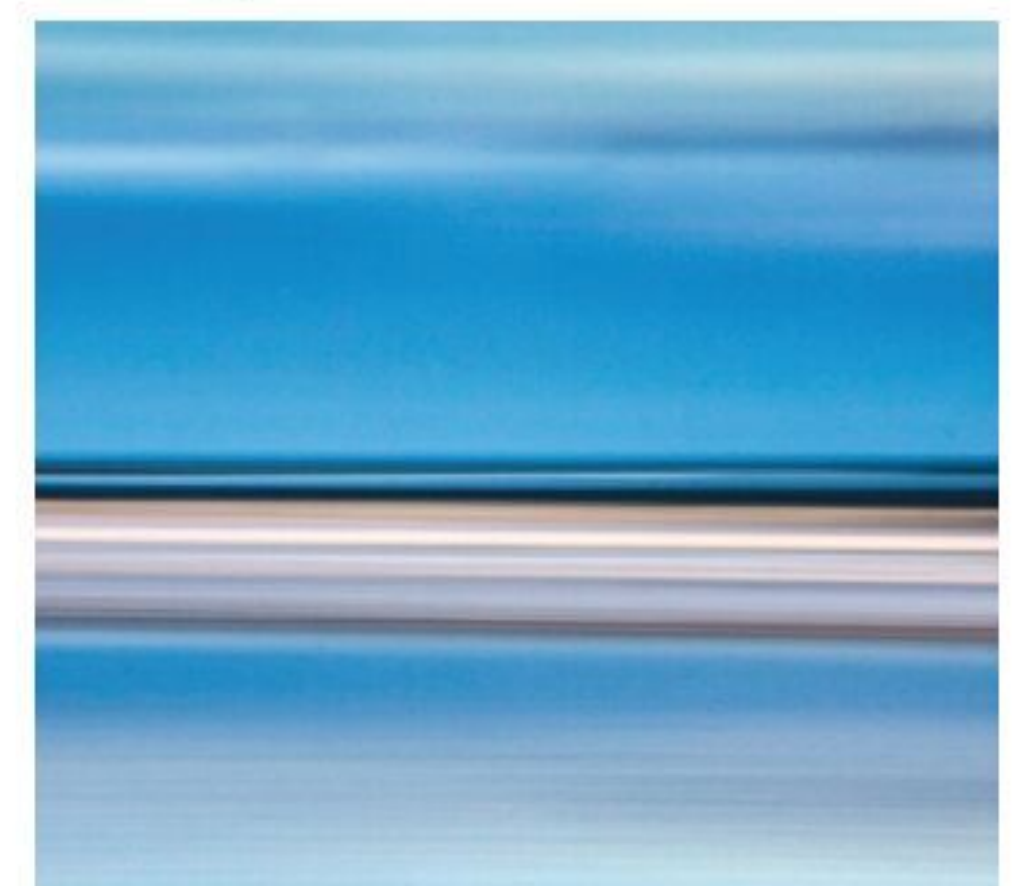
3 Slowly does it Use a shutter speed of 0.5-2secs to get the streaky effect. To achieve this, set the camera to aperture priority exposure mode and stop the lens down as far as you need to – in bright conditions you may need an ND filter.



4 Panning Loosen the horizontal lock on the tripod head so the camera swings freely from left to right. Move the camera to the left, start panning smoothly to the right and fire the shutter as you're panning. Keep panning after the shutter closes.



5 Vary your approach The results may be a little jerky to begin with, but you'll soon get the hang of it. As well as left-to-right pans, you can try right to left and also vary the speed of the pan so you get more or less streaking.



6 Finishing touches Back home, download the RAW files to your computer and process them in Photoshop or Lightroom. Adjust Clarity to boost contrast and vibrance to make the colours stronger – all the way to +100 if necessary.

PROJECT 02

CAPTURE DETAILS

Put together a striking collection of images based on a simple theme of your choice

Although some photographers work on personal projects for months or even years on end, don't feel that you have to. The whole point of projects is to give your photography a purpose, and sometimes that purpose may be to fill just a single day, or an hour or two.

For example, let's assume you've planned a day out with your camera at a great location

“One option is to create a photo montage”

and on the day, the weather decides to be cloudy and dull. Your dreams of shooting some fantastic scenic images fade before you even get started. So what to do? Pack up and head home, or try something different? That's exactly how this project came about. Marooned on Lindisfarne, Northumberland's

Holy Island, at high tide on a damp day, it was a case of sitting around until the causeway back to the mainland was open again (around two hours after high tide, just in case you're ever there), or make the best of a bad deal and take some photographs.

As it happens, Lindisfarne is a great place for detail shots. There's a working harbour on the island and all the paraphernalia that comes with it – fish crates, lobster pots, piles of ropes, chains, old boats in various states of disrepair scattered in the long grass – and unique fishermen's huts created from old herring boats, some more than a century old.

Blue is also a common colour on the island for no apparent reason, so after a few minutes of head scratching, it was decided that a project based on blue would be a good idea. All the shots were taken handheld with a 24-70mm zoom lens, over a period of around two

hours and in a relatively small area around the harbour – basically just wandering around and photographing anything that fitted the brief and looked interesting.

Of course, it's all well and good shooting dozens of images linked by a theme, but what do you do with them all? Well, one option is to create a photo montage. Individual detail images are rarely much to shout about, but put a bunch of them together and it's a different story. You often see them for sale as posters in touristy places – Doors of Dublin, Windows of Bath etc. Creating your own is really easy, and when you're done, you can make a nice big print and hang it on the wall.

Below Magpie

There are numerous old boats scattered around the harbour on Holy Island, so peeling paintwork and weathered timber are common sights



Shoot a theme

Choose a colour, find things that look like the letters of the alphabet from A-Z – there are endless 'themes' on which you can base photo projects, and by looking for things to shoot, your eye for a photograph will improve.

Create a montage

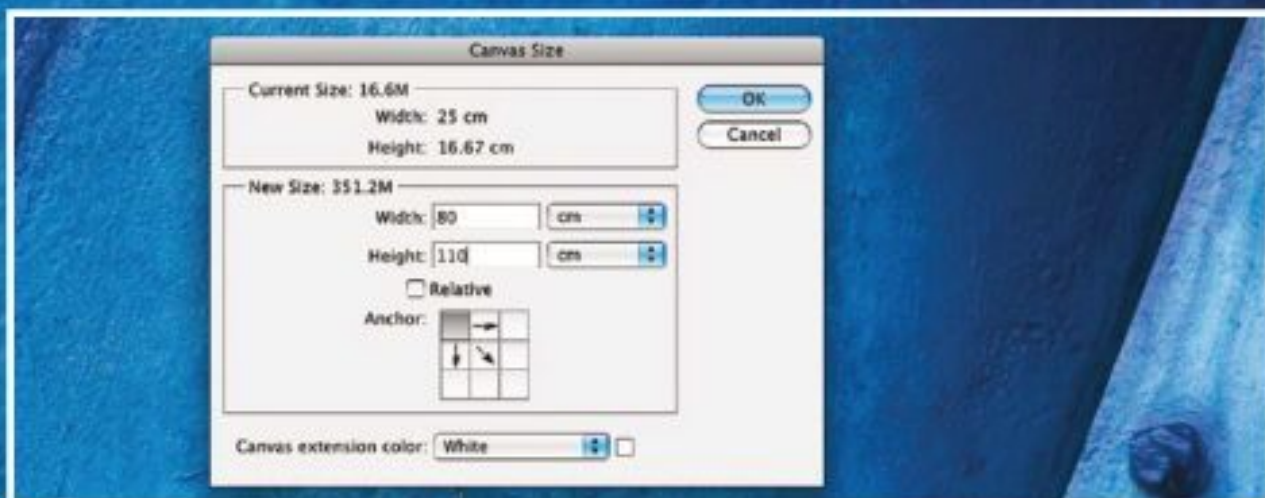
A series of shots from the same location can look great together



1 Take your shots Decide how many images you'd like to include in the final montage then set about shooting them. You can concentrate on a specific colour theme, as here, or just shoot random images that relate to the location you're in. Detail shots work well.



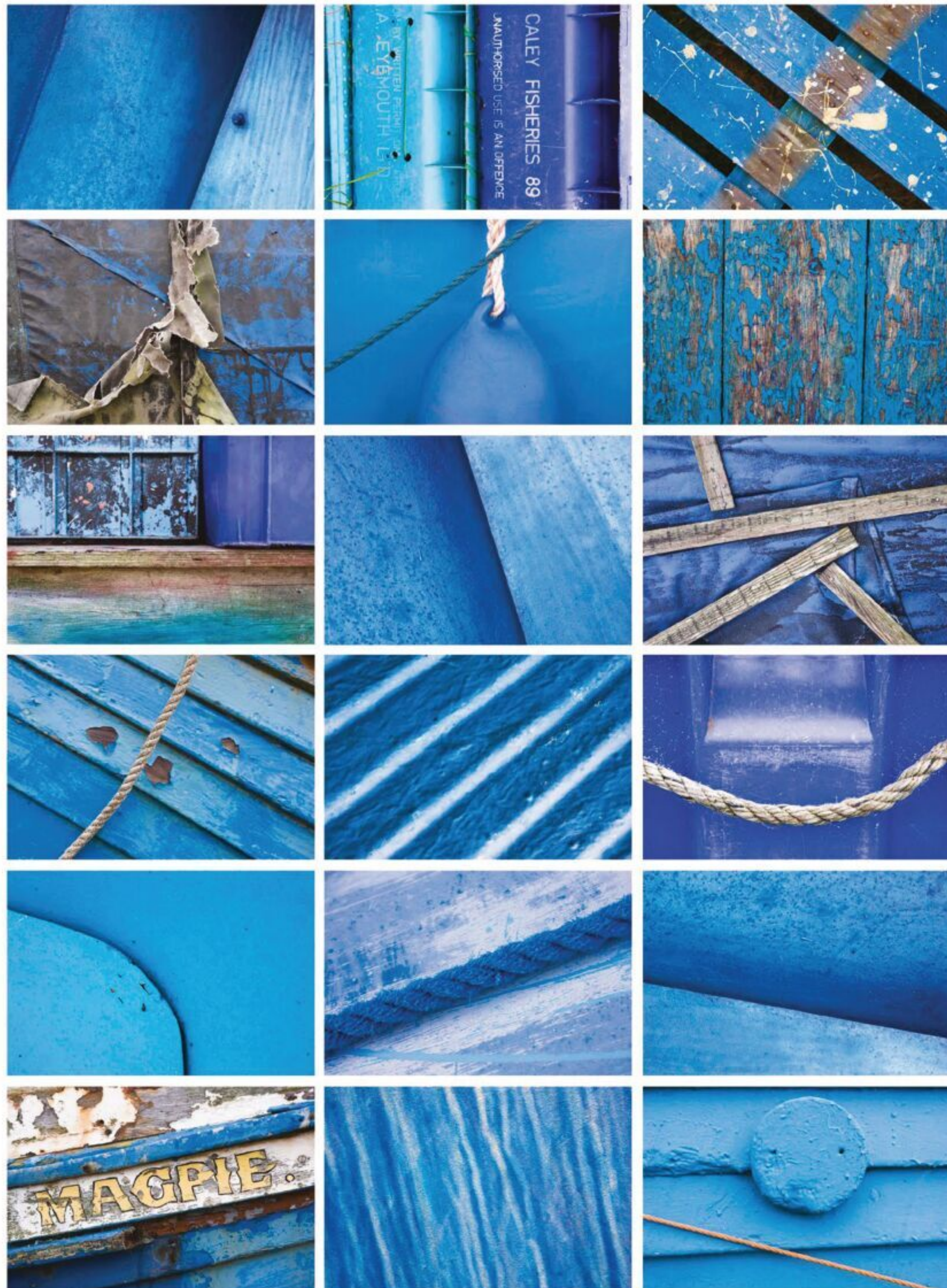
2 Process the images Once you're home, download the images to your computer and process them. The files don't need to be huge, so make JPEG copies and reduce the size to, say, 30cm on the longest edge. All of the images must be the same size and format.



3 Enlarge the canvas Open the first image in the montage and increase the size of the canvas so it's big enough to add all other images, and choose white as the background colour. This montage will be three images wide by six deep so 80x110cm should be enough.



4 Create the montage Using the Move Tool in Photoshop, drag and drop the next image onto the canvas. You can use the Move Tool to position the image next to the first one and the arrow keys to then fine-tune the position of the image. Repeat to complete the montage.

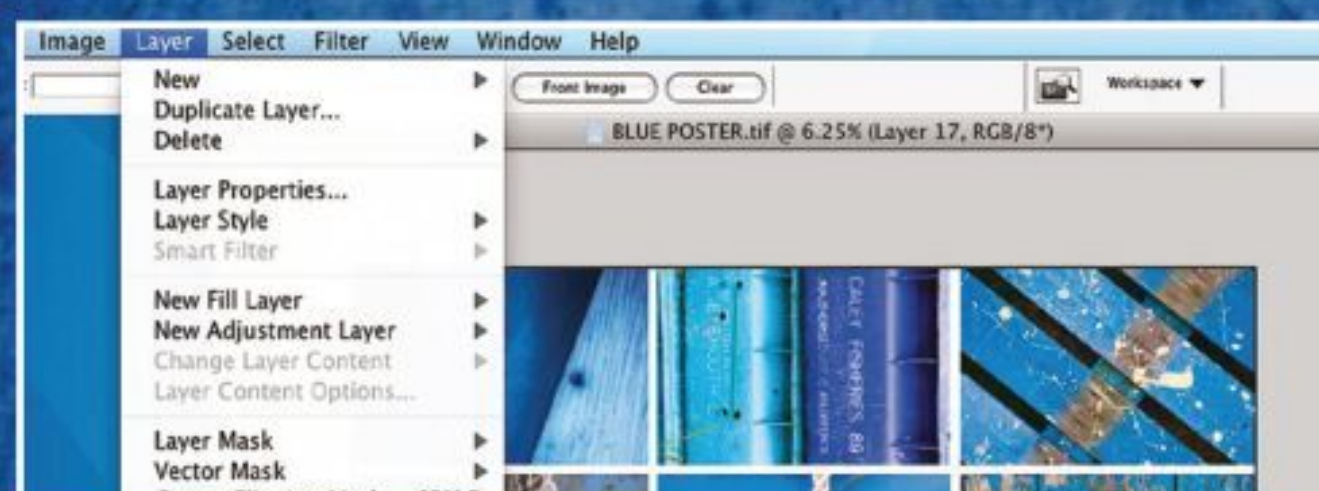


MOODY BLUES

Lee Frost

Finished poster

And here's the final result – a classy, creative poster that shows off the detail images to great effect and would look fantastic framed and hanging on a wall



5 Crop and flatten Crop any excess canvas then go to Layer>Flatten Image to merge the layers. Next, add a border by extending the canvas again. First add an even border all around the montage, then make the bottom edge deeper so that you have space to add some text.



6 Add a title Click on the Text Tool icon in Photoshop then drag the cursor across the bottom border of the poster to create a text box. Next, add a title or whatever text you like, then experiment with different type sizes, colours and typefaces until you're happy with the result.

PROJECT 03

WORK LOCALLY

There's no need to stray far from home to find potential project-worthy subjects to inspire your creativity

When was the last time you went for a wander with a camera in your neighbourhood and came back feeling inspired? The reality is, few of us ever do. We happily drive for hours cross-country or jump on a plane and fly to some far-flung destination, but taking photographs close to home? Forget it!

It's the old case of familiarity breeding contempt. When you see the same scenes day-in, day-out, it's hard to look at them through fresh eyes. Also, when you're at home, chores like gardening, walking the dog, cleaning the car or popping to the supermarket always take priority over your photography.

However, there's a lot to be said for finding an interesting location close to home and using it as the basis of a personal project. Not only does it always mean you have something to focus on whenever the chance to head out with a camera arises, but it also increases your chances of taking great photographs, because if the light and weather suddenly looks interesting, you won't have to travel far to take advantage of it.

Wherever you live, and whatever your photographic preferences are, there will always be something

locally to keep you inspired and occupied. The images here are a classic example – they were all taken in woodland just a two-minute walk from the photographer's home (which is only 20 miles outside central London). We have lots of woodland in the UK, as well as rivers, lakes and country parks –

even if you live in the middle of a city, chances are you'll be able to reach a patch of 'countryside' without too much effort. Failing that, why not choose an urban subject such as industry or dereliction. The

All the seasons

How about photographing exactly the same scene, from the same spot, with the same lens during spring, summer, autumn and winter? This will show how the landscape changes throughout the year.



subject matter doesn't have to be pretty, just interesting and challenging. Misty woodland, as lovely as it is, isn't everyone's cup of tea, but the idea of choosing a local location then returning to it at different times of day, in different weather conditions and different seasons over a period of months is what matters – getting under the skin of a place you've maybe walked past a hundred times and finding inspiration in the ordinary.

Legendary black and white photographer John Blakemore has produced many personal projects over the years and his website (www.johnblakemore.co.uk) is well worth a look.

Below

Autumn glory

Vibrant autumn colours, early morning mist and shafts of sunlight bursting through the foliage – woodland scenes don't get much better than this!

Shining through

Taking dramatic shots like this that are totally weather-dependent and fairly unpredictable is much easier when the location is close to home

Capture a misty autumn scene

Grab your tripod and head to a local woodland area on a misty morning



1 On location Make sure that you get to your chosen location nice and early so that you have plenty of time to find a suitable spot to shoot from. Next, mount your camera on a tripod, attach a wide-angle zoom such as a 16-35mm and fit a lens hood in order to reduce the risk of flare.



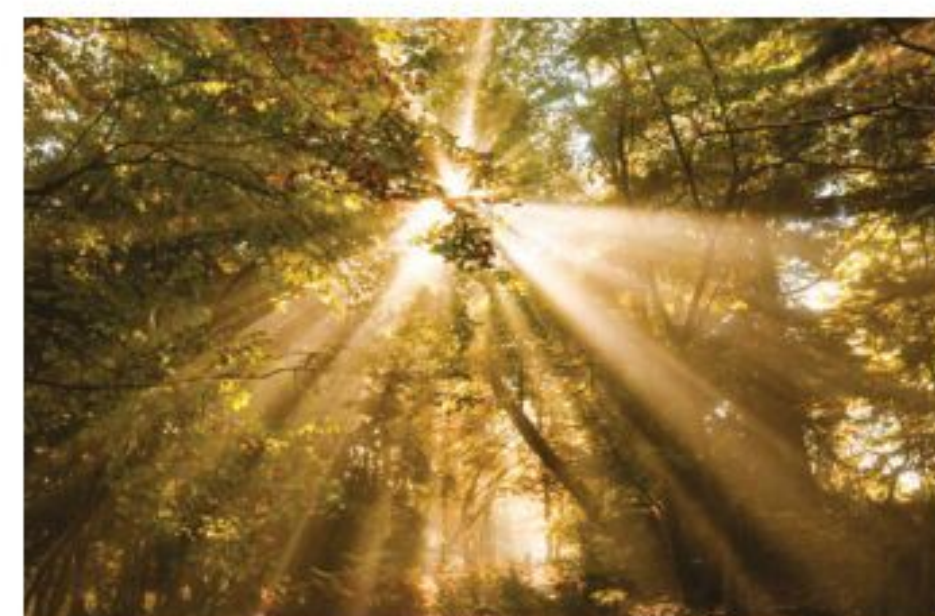
2 Get ready to shoot Next you will need to set your DSLR to aperture priority (Av) exposure mode, so you choose the aperture to control depth of field and the camera sorts out the exposure. Stop the lens down to f8 or f11 then compose your shot and focus using AF.



3 Take the shot Use a remote release to trip the shutter or set the self-timer to a ten-second delay and press the shutter release – the delay reduces the risk of vibrations causing camera shake. Check the preview image and histogram to see how the shot turned out.



4 Re-take the shot The first shot was underexposed due to the bright area in the centre of the frame fooling the camera's metering system. The problem is easily solved by increasing the exposure by +1 stops using the camera's exposure compensation facility.



5 Shoot alternative images Once you've got the first shot spot on, try alternatives by varying your viewpoint, lens focal length and camera format. Shoot portrait as well as landscape format, get down low, go wider – but work quickly as the mist will soon burn away.



6 Process images Download the images and start editing. In Adobe Camera Raw (ACR) increase Clarity to emphasise the sunbeams and Vibrance to enhance the colours. Experiment with colour temperature and use the Shadows slider to reveal more detail in the shadows.

Silver Efex Pro

By far the best software for black and white conversion. DxO now owns Nik Software, the original creator of Silver Efex Pro, and the latest Nik Collection is available for just \$69 from www.dxo.com, or you can download a free 30-day trial.



PROJECT 04

EDIT FOR CONSISTENCY

Give your project cohesion in post

When you work on a personal project, there must be some kind of connection between the images so that they work not only individually, but together. As we've already discussed, that could be location, subject, a specific theme or a photographic technique. However, the way you edit the images should also be considered, as that too can bind images together into a cohesive collection, even if the subject or theme of the project may seem rather vague.

For example, if you decide to shoot a portrait project, there must be consistency to how the images look, otherwise it could be any old set of mugshots, with no underlying bond. If you shoot those portraits using the same lighting and same background, you have the connection, but if you photograph people at work, or strangers in the street, it won't be so easy to unify the images as the setting and lighting will differ, as well as the lens you use.

That's where editing comes in. If you apply the same editing techniques to each image,

you'll immediately bring them closer together, even if they differ in all other respects. This is especially so when the final images are black and white. There's not a lot you can do to colour images to make them all have the same look and feel if they're shot in different locations, with different lighting, but once you remove that colour you've established an important relationship between the images. Further steps can then be taken, perhaps by adding the same tone to the images, cropping them all to a square, or adding a vignette to the edges to draw attention towards the main subject. It doesn't really matter what you do, providing you then stick to your guns and do the same thing to all images in the collection.

These moody black and white images will give you an idea of what we mean. The subject of the project is the old American cars that rumble down the streets of Havana. They were shot in different locations around the city, at different times of day and during different visits to Cuba, but the bold editing outlined in the tutorial is what brings them together.

Top left Heavy metal

This image has a wonderful metallic quality to it thanks to the editing technique used for the project – the car and buildings are almost glowing with light

Below Dawn patrol

When the subject of a project is quite specific, you have to make a special effort to produce different images by exploiting light, viewpoint, camera angle and lens choice

Above top On the move

Panning is a great technique to use on moving subjects as it adds a fantastic sense of motion and makes the main subject stand out boldly against the background

Above Classic car

Shots like this are very quick and easy to take – it's the editing that makes the difference and adds cohesion to the image collection



Classic American

The difference between the original colour RAW file and the final edited image is vast, and really captures the mood of the Cuban street scene

Apply a consistent tone

Unify a group of images by adding a distinct tone via editing techniques



1 Open the RAW file The original RAW file is opened in Adobe Camera Raw and Lens Corrections applied. The image is quite flat as it was shot on an overcast day. It's now opened in Photoshop CC 2018.



2 Convert to B&W The image is opened in Silver Efex Pro 2 via the Filter menu in Photoshop. The High Structure (Smooth) preset is applied to bring out more detail and boost contrast a little.



3 Darken the edges Next, the Burn Edges menu is opened on the right-hand side of the screen and the All Edges (Soft) preset applied. You can immediately see the effect it has had on the image.



4 Darken some more It's possible to select the top edge, bottom edge or either side of the image individually then make them darker or lighter, and also extend or reduce the reach of the Burn Edges tool. Each edge is darkened some more.



5 Add a tone In the Toning menu on the right-hand side of the Silver Efex Pro screen, the first Coffee tone option (number 13 on the toner list) is selected. This adds a pleasant warm tone to the image and gives it more of an aged look.



6 Final tweaks The warm tone is too obvious so its strength is reduced using the slider in the Toning menu. The changes made in Silver Efex Pro are saved, then back in Photoshop, the contrast is boosted a little by adjusting Curves.

TECHNIQUES

Right
Front-to-back sharpness
With the right equipment and good technique, it's possible to shoot images that are sharp from the immediate foreground through to the distant horizon
All images © Mark Bauer



LEARN PRO TECHNIQUES FOR SHARPER LANDSCAPES

With high-resolution sensors exposing every flaw in technique, sharpness is now more important than ever. Learn how to ensure maximum sharpness in your imagery

Successful landscape photography has always placed a lot of emphasis on detail and sharpness. However, with the introduction of modern high-resolution sensors, sharpness and the techniques needed to achieve it have become increasingly important.

So what contributes towards image sharpness? Equipment obviously has a bearing on this, starting with your choice of camera. Sensor size has an effect, as does sensor design – for example, if there is an anti-aliasing filter in front of the sensor, this will cause a degree of softness. Lenses also have a significant impact. It used to be the case that primes were noticeably sharper than zoom lenses, but in recent years some exceptionally good zoom lenses have been

made available. However, good lenses don't come cheap – spending a little bit more will usually result in more quality. The good news is that the most useful lenses for landscapes are wide angles, which are considerably less expensive than telephotos. Moreover, using a suitable tripod and head are as important as camera and lens choice.

How you control depth of field – via your choice of aperture and where you focus – also impacts upon the sharpness of your images, and choice of aperture is also important in controlling optical aberrations such as diffraction, which can result in softness. To be fully in control of sharpness, you will also need to master more advanced techniques, such as focus stacking and using tilt-shift lenses.

USE THE RIGHT KIT FOR THE JOB

The foundations for sharp landscapes are a sturdy tripod and solid head

The most effective way to improve sharpness is also the simplest: mount your camera on a tripod. Choosing the right tripod and head is a surprisingly difficult decision, however, as there is a huge number of manufacturers and models to choose from.

It's important to choose a tripod that is sturdy and has a useful maximum height (there will be occasions when you will want to shoot above head height), as well as the ability to be set up low to the ground for more dramatic perspectives. Apart from this, the basic choices to be made are the material it's made from, the number of leg sections and whether or not it has a centre column.

Tripods are usually made from either aluminium or carbon fibre. Carbon fibre is more expensive, but considerably lighter, which is an important consideration as landscape photography often involves long hikes. Carbon fibre is also more stable from the point of view that it absorbs vibrations better. For greater stability, look for a model that has a hook at the bottom, so you can hang a weight off it in windy conditions.

When it comes to centre columns, tripods without them are, in theory, more stable, but a centre column adds flexibility and has little practical impact on stability. More important is the number of leg sections – too many will certainly add to the 'wobbliness' of a tripod. Many landscapers favour three-section tripods, but four is probably acceptable and means the tripod will fold up smaller.

The tripod head is as important as the legs. There are basically three types of head: ball heads, three-way pan-and-tilt heads and geared heads. Ball heads tend to have a greater strength-to-weight ratio; choose one with friction control, as this makes small adjustments easier. Many landscape specialists prefer geared heads, however, as these enable you to make very fine adjustments to compositions.

Whichever type you choose, make sure it has a good payload; ideally, at least double the weight of your heaviest camera/lens combination, as the camera will at times be set up off-centre and the increased torque will affect stability.

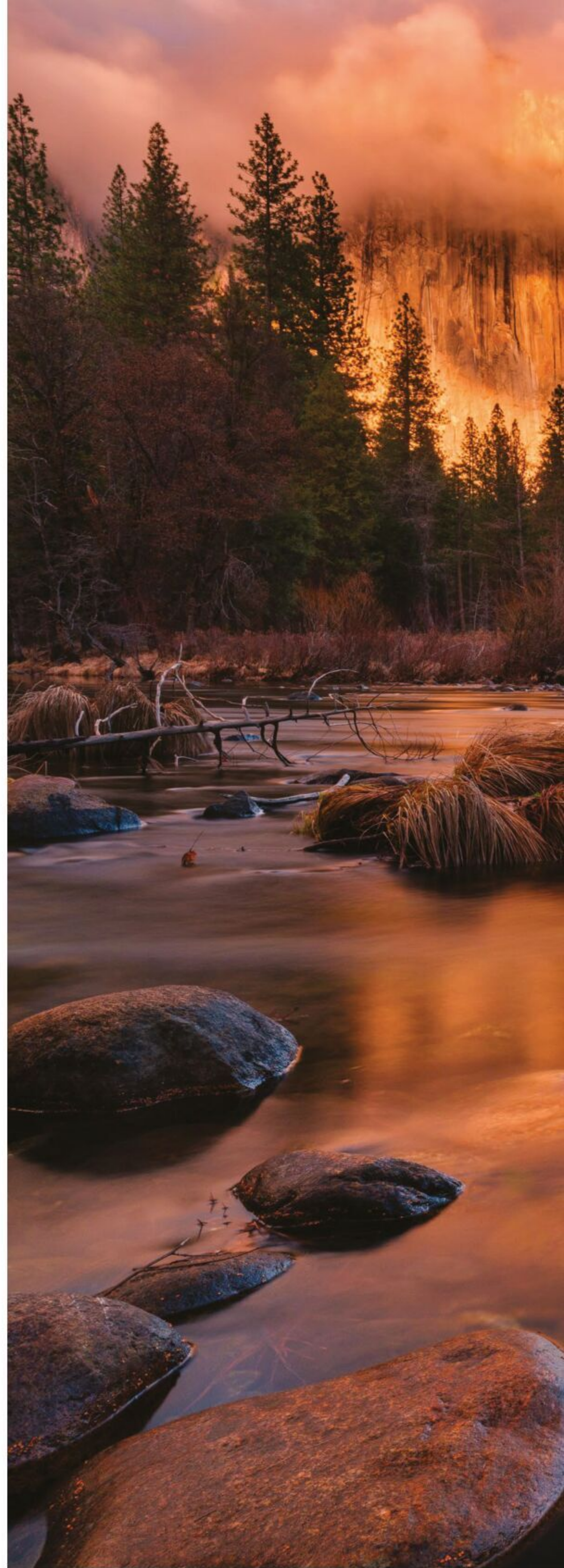


Right Tripod height

A tripod that can be set up low to the ground enables you to compose dramatic images that place emphasis on the foreground

Left Low light

Many landscapes are shot in low light, which means using a tripod is the only way to guarantee a sharp image



Position a tripod

Learn how to set up for maximum stability and sharpness



BEFORE

No tripod

In this light, even pushing up the ISO and opening the aperture doesn't get a fast-enough shutter speed to enable hand-holding without camera shake.



1 Extend the legs Start with the top section and work down. This is best for stability, as the bottom sections of some tripods can be quite thin.



2 Adjust the height It is best to alter the height of the tripod by adjusting the legs, as this gives a more stable platform than adjusting the centre column.



3 Fine-tune the height You can also use the centre column to fine-tune the height, as this is more convenient, though try to avoid using it on windy days.

Try mirror lock-up

Even when using a tripod, pressing the shutter button can cause vibrations, so always use a remote release. On DSLRs, vibrations can also be caused by the action of the mirror, so use mirror lock-up, which enables you to raise the mirror and wait before firing the shutter.



4 Level the tripod Most tripods have a built-in spirit level. Use this to set up the tripod as level as possible. If it is leaning, this is likely to result in unsharp images.



5 Compose your shot A good tripod head makes composition easier. Geared heads and ball heads with friction control let you make minor adjustments easily.



6 Use a remote release Release the shutter using a remote release. If your cam has a mirror, use mirror lock-up and wait a few seconds to allow vibrations to die down.



With tripod

Working in low light levels such as this, you can still shoot at base ISO to maximise image quality and stop down the aperture to get sufficient depth of field.



Find shelter from high wind

Extreme wind is the biggest challenge for landscape shooters, but rather than stay at home when it's forecast to be windy, check the direction it's coming from. Look on a map and see if there are any interesting locations that may be sheltered from the wind by hills or cliffs.

Challenging weather

Read the following tips to find out how to cope with tough conditions

☀ STRONG WINDS

If your tripod has a hook, use this to add extra weight. Don't just hang your bag from it, though – it will swing, causing more vibration. Instead, attach your bag using a bungee strap.



☀ SEA SPRAY

A major issue on the coast is sea spray. It's not possible to simply wipe it off as it smears easily. Use a dedicated cleaning fluid, such as Zeiss lens cleaner or Lee's ClearLEE.



☀ MIST AND FOG

Mist and fog softens objects but images can be successful if you work with this natural effect. Seek out subjects with bold shapes and outlines so there is some definition.



OVERCOME LOCATION CHALLENGES

You can't control the shooting conditions, but you can take steps to mitigate the effects

Each location and viewpoint presents its own challenges when it comes to achieving sharp images. Landscape photographers also frequently find themselves battling the weather and lighting conditions, which can have a negative impact on sharpness.

Anywhere that requires a long walk can be a challenge, especially if you have to carry lots of heavy equipment with you. The temptation might be to save weight by leaving your tripod behind. This would be a mistake, however, as hand-holding, even in good lighting, just doesn't work for most landscape images – you will almost certainly find yourself compromising by shooting at a higher ISO or wider aperture than is desirable.

In fact, it's perfectly possible to get a tripod and head combination that is both light enough to carry comfortably for long distances and also sturdy enough for quite challenging conditions. There are carbon fibre tripods available that weigh less than one and a half kilos while being able to support a load of 16kg, and ball heads which weigh less than

half a kilo with a maximum load of 20 kilos or so – a very portable yet stable combination.

As well as distance, specific locations can present many difficulties that affect sharpness: uneven ground on hills, soft ground on beaches and muddy paths, slippery surfaces and vibrations (for example, people walking over decking). Different weather conditions also throw up a number of problems. High wind is the most obviously difficult as this can cause vibrations that can severely soften images; it can also cause movement and therefore blur key parts of the scene, such as foliage or flowers.

On the coast, sea spray is probably the biggest enemy of sharpness as it coats the lens or filter, diffusing light and smearing details; it also increases the risk of lens flare in certain lighting conditions.

As these marginal conditions can often result in the most dramatic images, it's not simply a matter of avoiding them, but rather developing techniques that will help you overcome the problems.



Left
Wooden pier

These are difficult subjects as the structure can shake in high winds and rough seas, and people walking past can also cause vibrations



Above left
Coastal cliff tops

Coastal cliff tops often have dramatic views, but are challenging locations as they are exposed to wind and prone to sea spray, even high up

Above right
Trees and flowers

Foliage is one of the most difficult subjects to capture sharply as even the slightest breeze can move your subject, resulting in motion blur

Difficult locations – and how to deal with them

Follow these pro suggestions

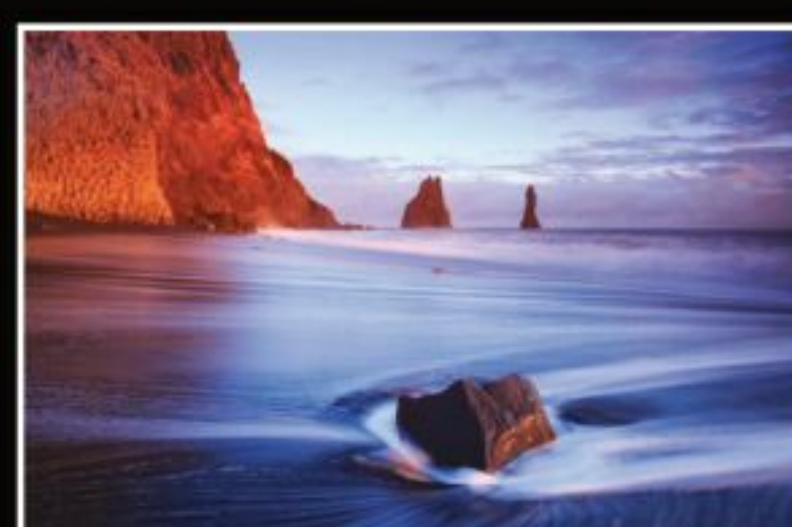
🌿 SLOPING HILLSIDES

It's difficult to set up on steep, sloping hills, but good tripods allow you to set the legs at various angles. If possible, use a pre-set angle, so the legs don't move during the exposure.



🌿 SANDY BEACHES

On beaches, tripods can sink into the sand – a problem during long exposures. If your tripod has spikes, jam the legs deep into the sand or shingle before exposing.



🌿 WOODLAND AND FOREST

The slightest breeze can blur foliage. Wait until it's calm, and if necessary increase the ISO to get a faster shutter speed. Review the image and check every detail is sharp.





Below
Stopping down
To get enough depth of field, this image was shot at f22. It's sharp enough but diffraction has softened some fine detail

Above
Close foreground
With classic 'close foreground' landscapes, double-distance focusing is an easy technique for maximising sharpness

MAXIMISE LENS SHARPNESS

Understanding lenses and focusing technique is important for obtaining critical sharpness

No lens is perfectly sharp, especially when stopped down to small apertures, resulting in diffraction – the bending of light rays as they hit the aperture blades. The smaller the aperture, more light rays get bent, so images get progressively softer as you stop down.

The dilemma is that it is difficult to achieve enough depth of field without stopping down to a relatively small aperture. A balance has to be struck, where the aperture is small enough to get the depth of field you need, but not so small that diffraction becomes a problem.

Most lenses are sharpest at mid-apertures, usually around f8. With good lenses, f11 will be only marginally worse and at f16, you will see a difference, though not an extreme one. Beyond that, images can become noticeably soft. The sensible advice, therefore, is to shoot in the f8 to f11 range where possible, but not to be too concerned about stopping down to f16; however, try to avoid stopping down further.

Knowing where in the scene to focus is key as this allows you to place the zone of

sharpness where you need it, so that depth of field extends from foreground to background. Rather than the traditional focusing 'a third of the way in' to the scene, which is rather imprecise, try 'double-distance' focusing. Assuming you're shooting with a wide-angle lens and a smallish aperture, estimate the distance from the camera to the nearest object you want to keep sharp and then focus at double that distance. In practice, this delivers consistently good results.

You need to make sure that once you've focused, focus is locked. So either focus manually, or set up 'back-button focusing' where focusing is decoupled from the shutter button and assigned to one of the buttons on the rear of the camera.

Finally, to make sure your lenses perform at their best, keep them and your filters clean and free of dust and be sure to switch off vibration reduction when the camera is mounted on a tripod, as VR on tripod-mounted lenses can actually introduce shake.

Use tripod collars

Be aware that if you mount a camera with a heavy telephoto onto a tripod, the weight of the lens can cause the head to droop, resulting in a soft image. It's better to use a tripod collar and attach the lens to the tripod – the lens-camera combination is then more balanced.



Try double-distance focusing

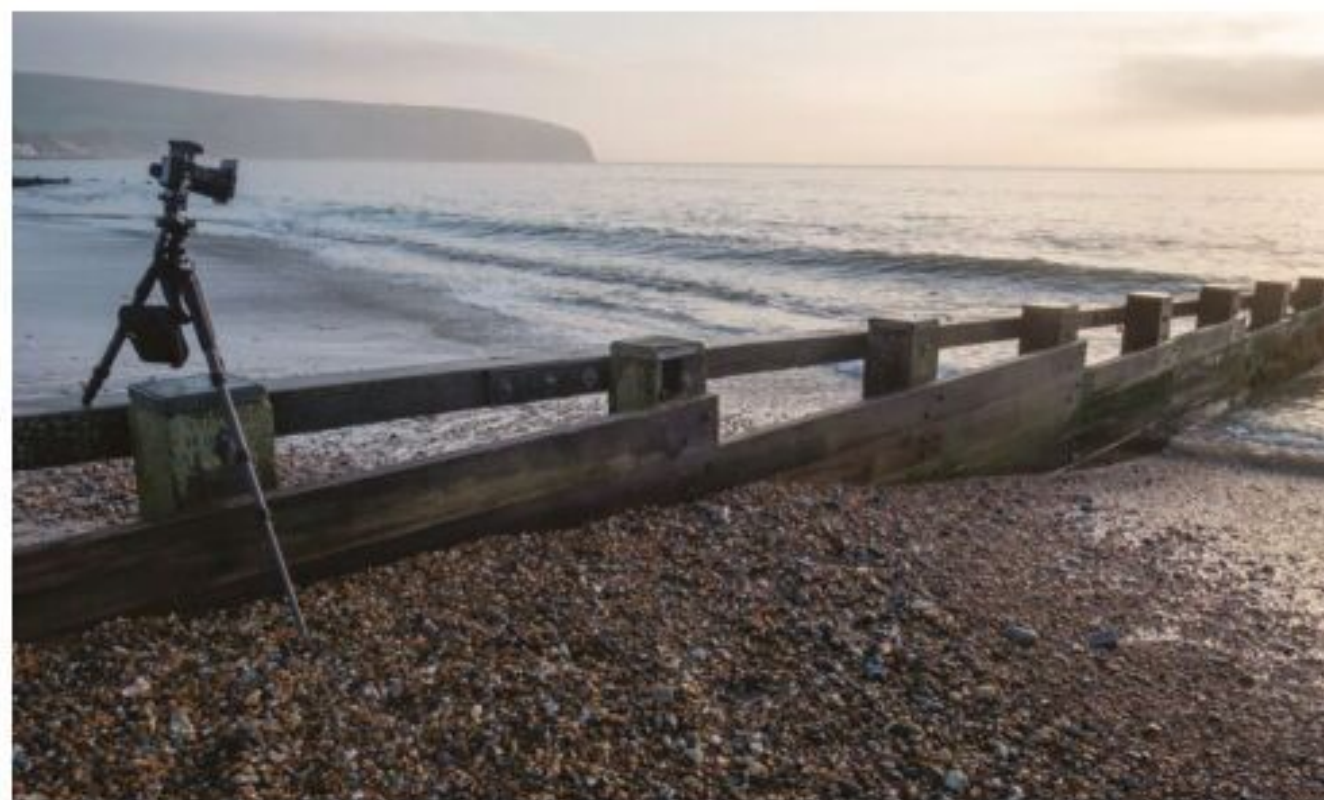
Learn an easy technique for capturing front-to-back sharpness



1 Compose your shot At this stage, don't concern yourself with any technical considerations; concentrate purely on the aesthetic and worry about sharpness later.



2 Calculate distances Decide the nearest part of the scene that needs to be sharp – here, the first groyne post – and calculate the distance from that to the image plane.



3 Choose a focal point Double the distance and choose a focal point that is that distance from the camera. Here, it's easy: the second post along the groyne.



Focus on the background

As this crop of the image, showing the foreground post, clearly demonstrates, focusing on the background does not generate sufficient depth of field. It is outside the zone of sharpness and is noticeably soft



4 Focus precisely Focus on the point. If using AF, make sure the AF point is placed precisely where you want it. Use back-button or manual focus to ensure focus is locked.



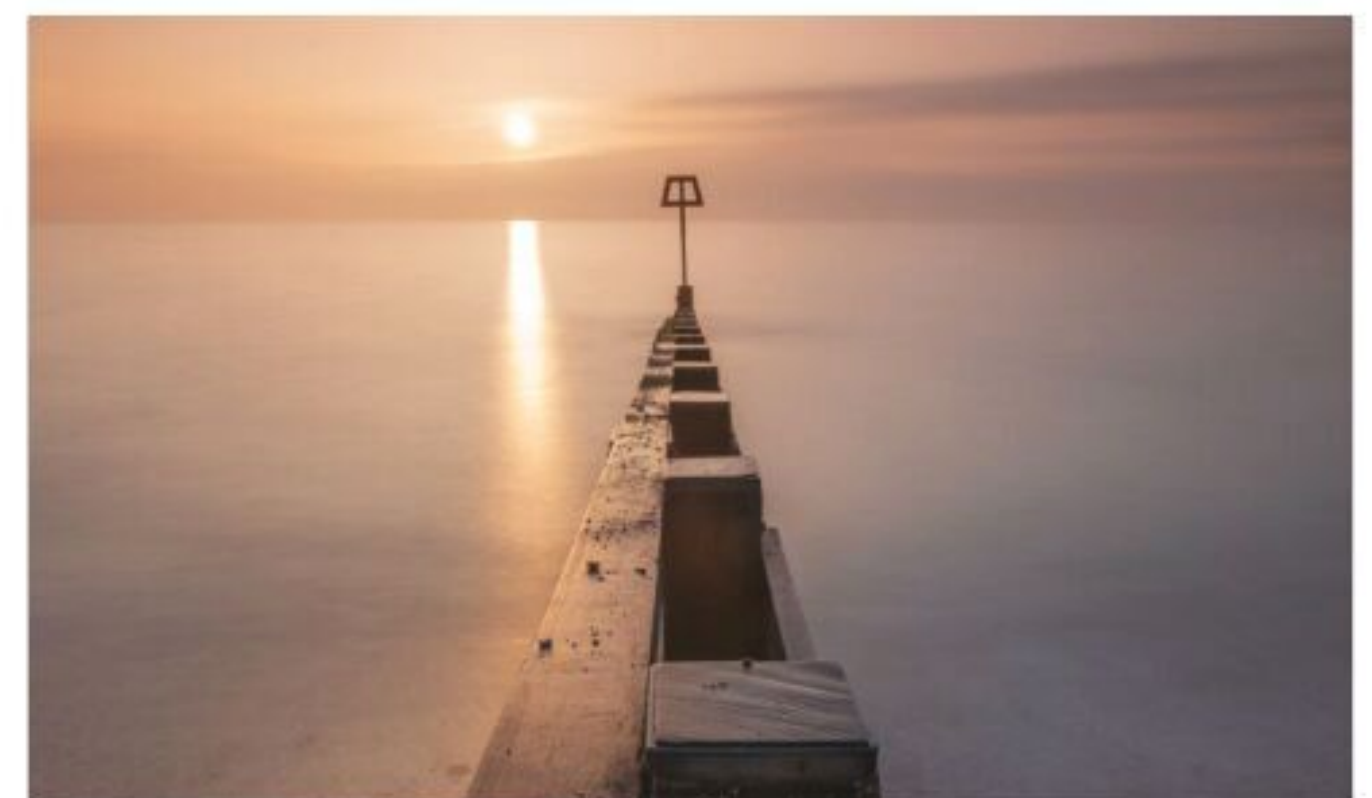
AFTER

Double-distance focusing

The same post but from the final image, in which double-distance focusing was applied. The post is now clearly within the depth of field and is absolutely pin-sharp



5 Review the image Zoom in to 100%, check that the foreground is sharp and then check the background. Re-shoot with adjusted focus if necessary.



6 Final image Linear perspective creates the impression of depth and extensive depth of field with front-to-back sharpness enhances the effect.

TRY ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

Follow these tips to squeeze a little extra sharpness from your images in tricky situations

Sometimes, if you have very close foreground interest, you need to be a little more precise than double-distance focusing allows. For every combination of focal length and aperture, there is one focusing distance that generates maximum depth of field – the hyperfocal distance. The calculations are quite complex, but fortunately there are many published charts and apps that show the hyperfocal distance for almost any combination. So for example, if you are shooting with a full-frame camera at 28mm f11, your app will tell you that the hyperfocal distance is ten feet; find an object at that

Opposite below
Focus on the background
Where there is nothing close to the camera, the hyperfocal distance is unnecessary. This image was focused on the background

distance and focus on it. As depth of field extends from half the hyperfocal distance to infinity, everything from five feet will be sharp. Be careful not to overuse the hyperfocal distance, however. It's only necessary when you have close foreground interest. If there is nothing close to the camera, you don't need to prioritise sharpness in the foreground, so can focus further in – your background will be sharper as a result. Sometimes, even the hyperfocal distance will not generate enough depth of field without stopping the lens down to its minimum aperture, which will soften the image due to

Opposite above
Tilt-shift lenses
This was shot with a 17mm tilt-shift lens, which has created phenomenal depth of field; it's sharp from immediately in front of the camera

the effects of diffraction. One solution is to use a tilt-shift lens. With a tilt-shift it is possible to tilt the plane of focus, creating extremely extensive depth of field without the need to stop the lens down. There are disadvantages, however: tilt-shifts are expensive, always prime lenses and manual focus only. Focus stacking is a technique that can be used with any lens and also enables you to shoot using the lens's 'sweet spot'. It is the technique of blending several images that have been focused at different points, to give a single image that contains the sharpest parts of each image and is therefore sharp from foreground to background. It is a relatively straightforward technique and several cameras offer it as an automated function. Dedicated software is available to blend images, but this can also be done in Photoshop.

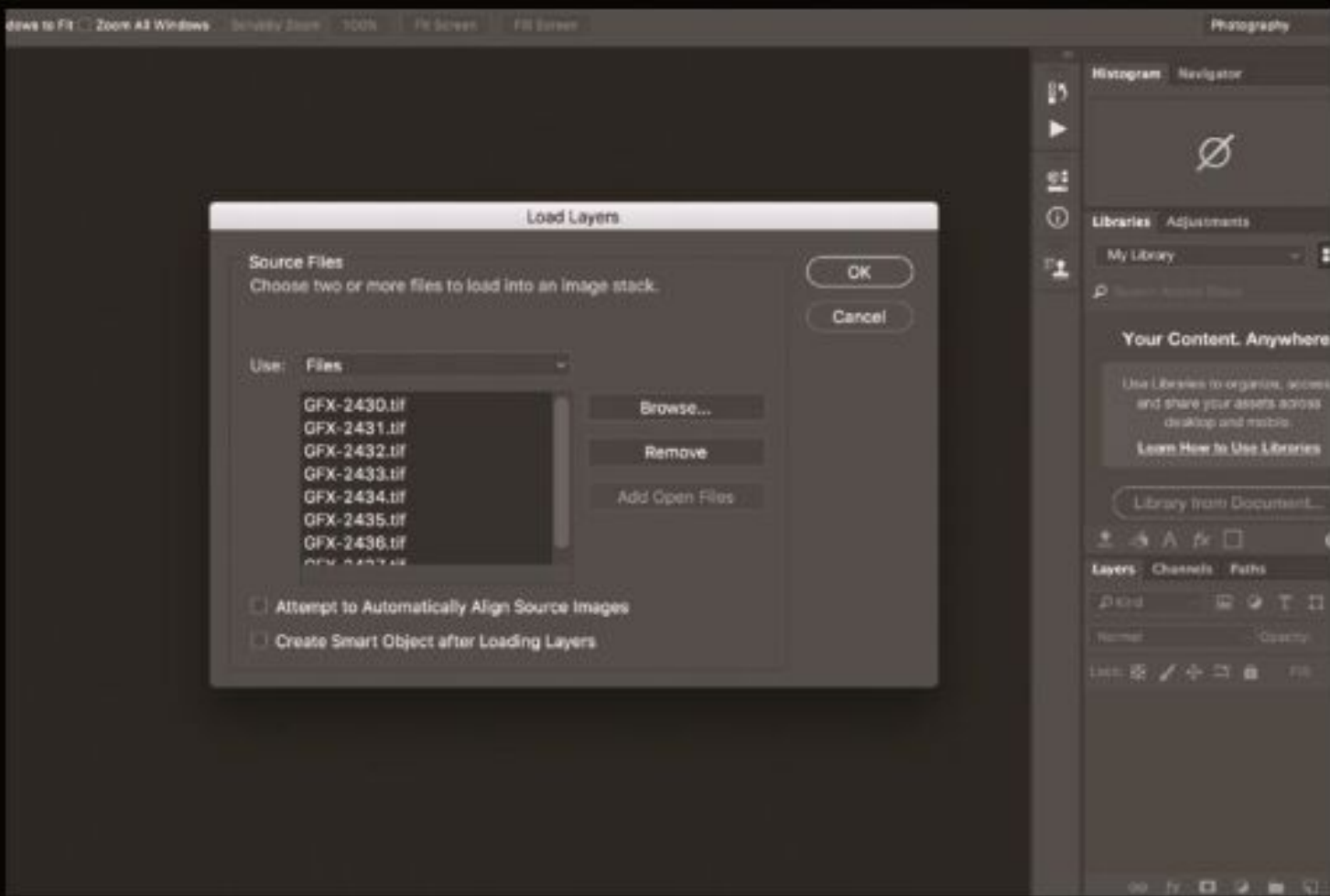
Focus stack using Photoshop

The number of images you need for focus stacking depends on focal length, aperture and subject distance. Make sure there is a bit of overlap in depth of field between the images when you shoot them. You can blend images manually, usually layer masks, but providing there is no movement between images, automation is possible. Follow these steps.



BEFORE

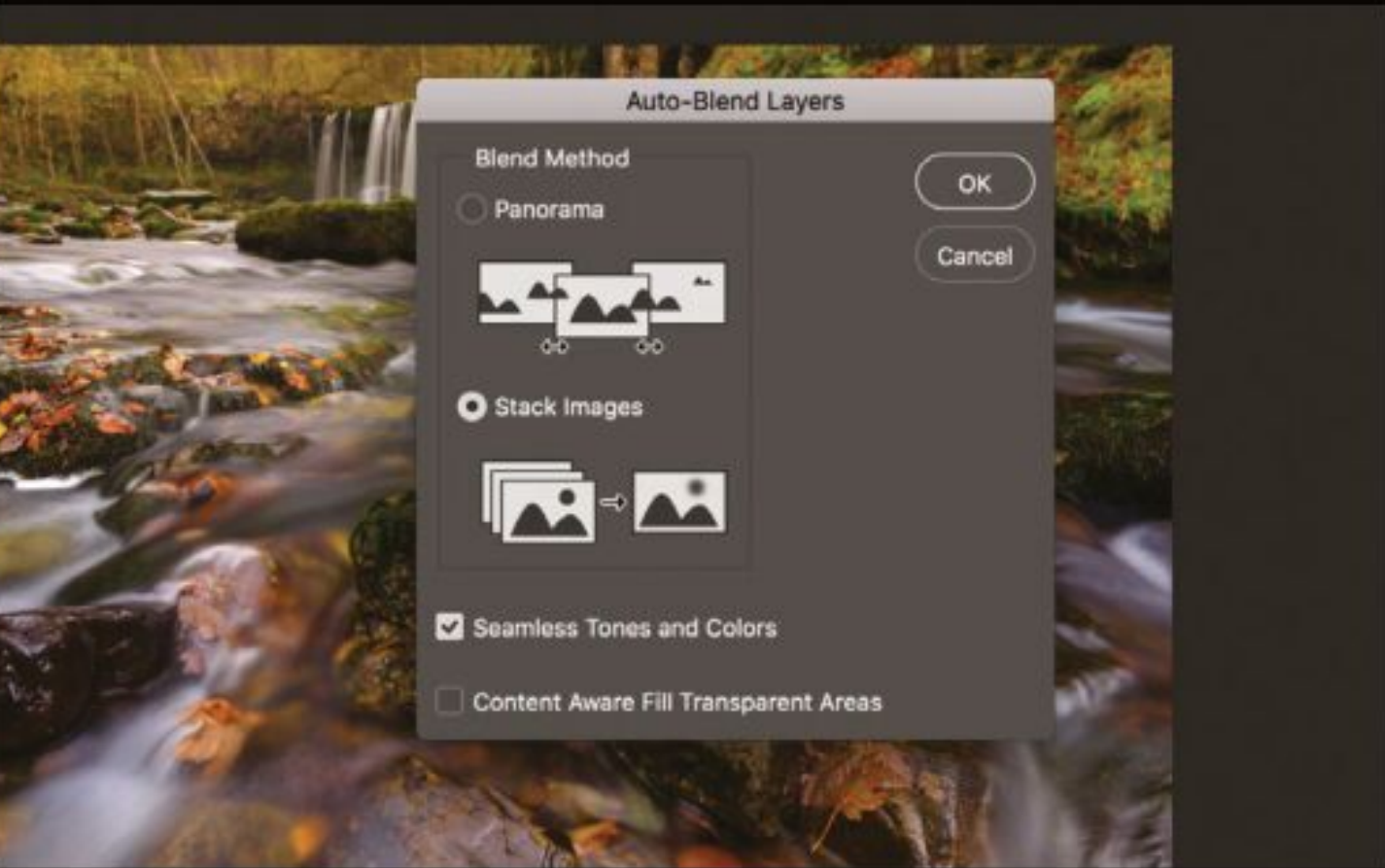
Hyperfocal distance
This crop of the image (not focus-stacked) shows that it was not possible to get enough DOF at f8 even using the hyperfocal distance



1 Load images Click on File>Scripts>Load files into Stack. In the dialogue box that appears, select your files and click OK. Keep files in the order they were shot.



2 Align layers The files will be open with each image as a separate layer. Select all the layers and click Edit>Auto-Align Layers. Select Auto, click OK and wait for the layers to be aligned.



3 Blend layers Click Edit>Auto-Blend Layers. Check the Stack Images box in the dialogue and click OK. Photoshop will take the sharply focused parts from each layer and blend them to produce an image with enhanced depth of field.



4 Finish editing If necessary, crop the image to remove blurred edges, flatten the layers and then continue to make your usual image adjustments to contrast, colour balance, saturation and so on. And that's it!



Focus stacking
The crop from the focus-stacked image shows that DOF extends all the way to the background. As the image was shot at f8, it is bitingly sharp

Focus-stacking software

Dedicated focus-stacking software is available, which gives a greater degree of control and also enables you to tether your camera and automate stacking at the shooting stage. Helicon Focus (heliconsoft.com) and Zerene Stacker (zerenesystems.com) are among the most popular.

SHARPEN IN POST

For ultimate sharpness, you will need to learn some post-processing techniques

Sharpening is an important part of post-production and a much bigger topic than most photographers realise; there have even been whole books written about it. It is essentially a three-stage process: Capture Sharpening, Creative Sharpening and Output Sharpening.

Capture sharpening is carried out at the RAW processing stage to offset the natural softness of digital capture caused by anti-aliasing filters, lens aberrations and the interpolation of colour from the information recorded by the sensor ('demosaicing').

Creative sharpening involves sharpening specific areas of the image – for example, the eyes in a portrait. It is not so common in landscape photography, but there are occasions when it is necessary. Output sharpening is the final round of sharpening which is applied to the image to make it ready for reproduction; the amount and nature of output sharpening depends on the medium of reproduction and size of the image.

All good RAW converters offer a high level of control over sharpening. If we look at one of the most popular applications, Adobe Lightroom, there are four sliders: Amount, Radius, Detail and Masking. Amount does exactly what you'd expect, Radius controls how far from each pixel the Amount setting is allowed to affect neighbouring pixels, and Detail preserves detail in the high-frequency parts of the image. The Masking slider controls how much of the overall image is affected by sharpening and enables you to mask off areas of smooth texture, so that any noise there isn't accentuated.

For most landscapes, the idea is to reveal fine detail and change settings slightly from the Lightroom defaults; a higher Amount, lower Radius and higher Detail setting usually does the trick – try values of around Amount 40, Radius 0.7-0.8 and Detail 35. There is no 'magic setting' for Masking, which will vary from image to image – hold down the Alt key and increase the amount until the areas you want to mask off are selected.

In Lightroom, there is also the Clarity slider, which can be used to enhance detail on textured surfaces – though it can also increase noise, so should be applied with care.

Working with Photoshop layers

Creative sharpening can also be carried out using Photoshop. You can use one of the selection tools and apply the local sharpening directly to the original image or you can 'paint' on the sharpening gradually, using layer masks, which gives you a little more control over the process.



Right top Local enhancements

A little extra sharpening and clarity was applied to bring out the texture in the waves

Right below Smooth texture

Images with large areas of smooth texture require a larger amount of masking

Left Textured surfaces

For textured surfaces, the Clarity slider is excellent for revealing detail

Explore creative sharpening

Selectively apply sharpening to draw attention to key areas



BEFORE

Global adjustments only

This is the image processed after the basic colour and tonal adjustments had been made. It's a decent shot, but lacks any real drama or punch. In particular, the foreground looks dull

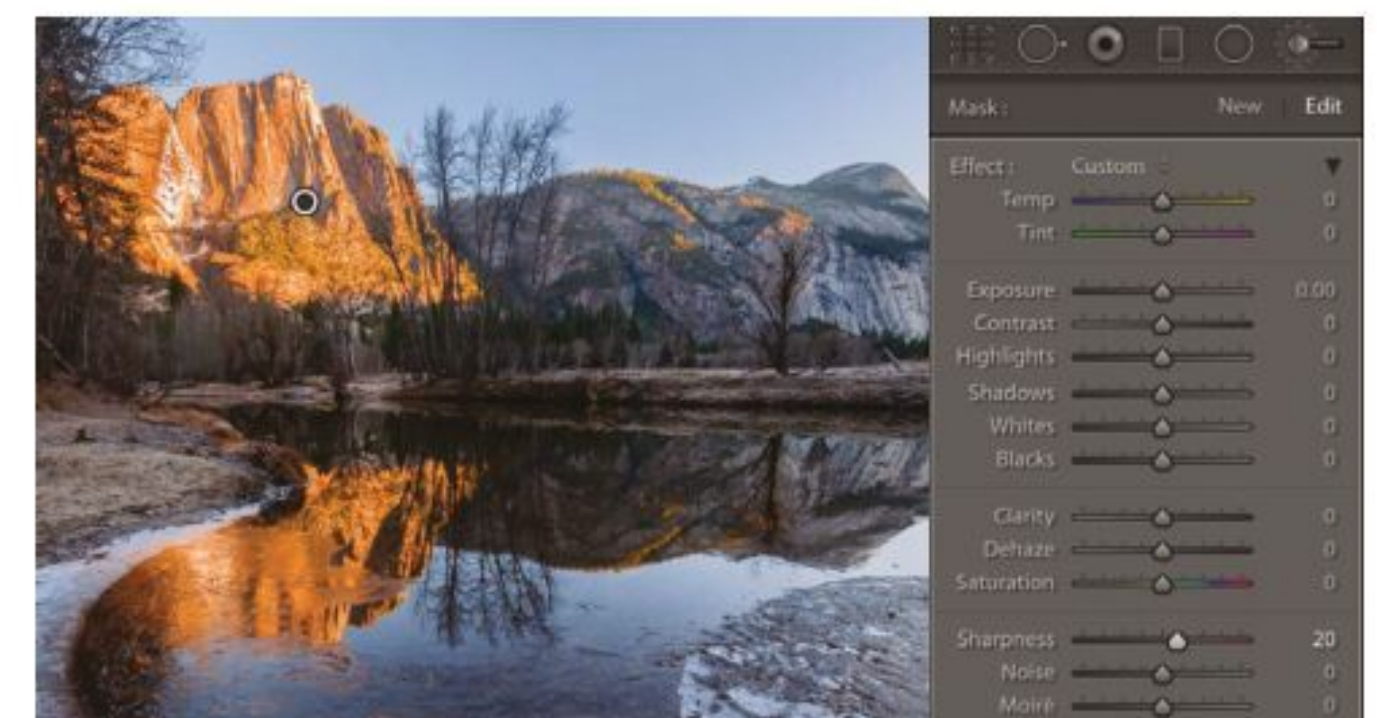
1 Starting point This is the image when it is first imported into Lightroom. It is obvious that work needs to be done on the key areas of the background peak and foreground ice, plus basic tonal adjustments.



2 Basic adjustments Making standard adjustments to white balance, exposure, contrast and so on shows an immediate improvement, but it still lacks a little punch in the important areas, especially the foreground.



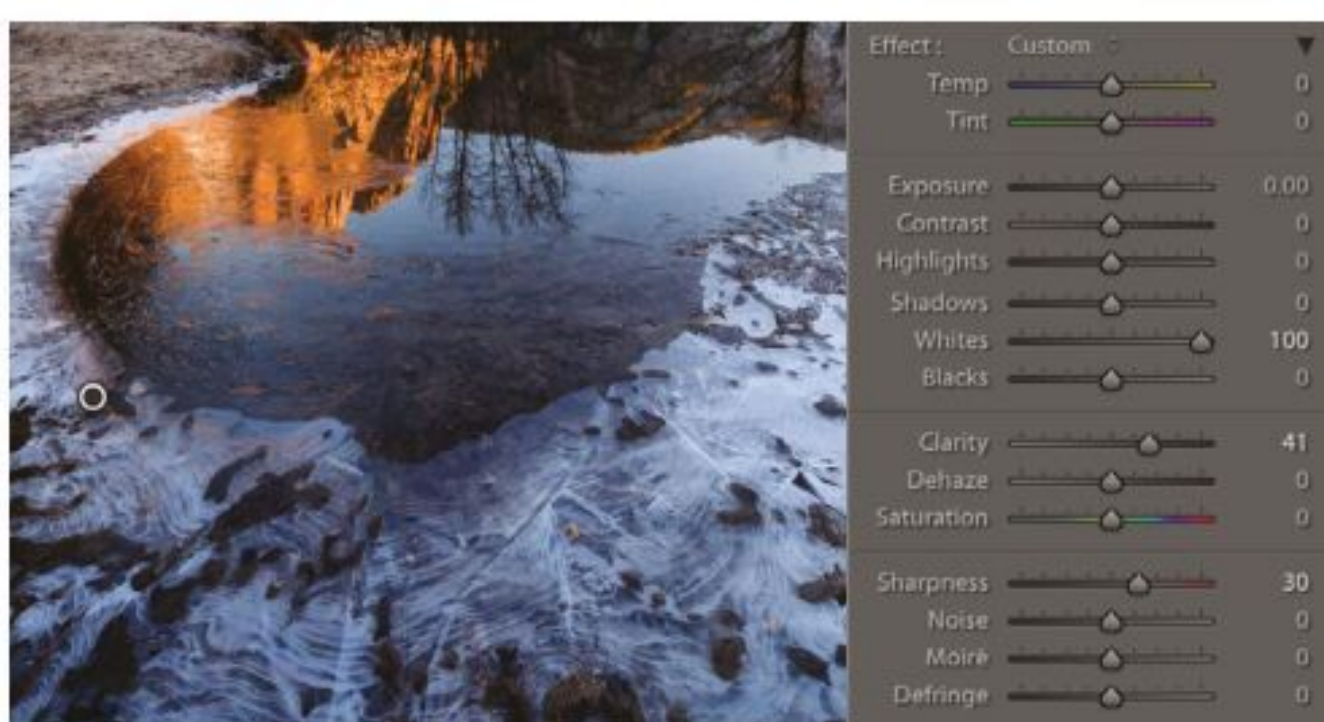
3 Select an area Using the Adjustment Brush (top right of the toolbar below the histogram), a mask is painted onto the sunny peak in the background. Selecting Auto Mask means that edges are automatically found.



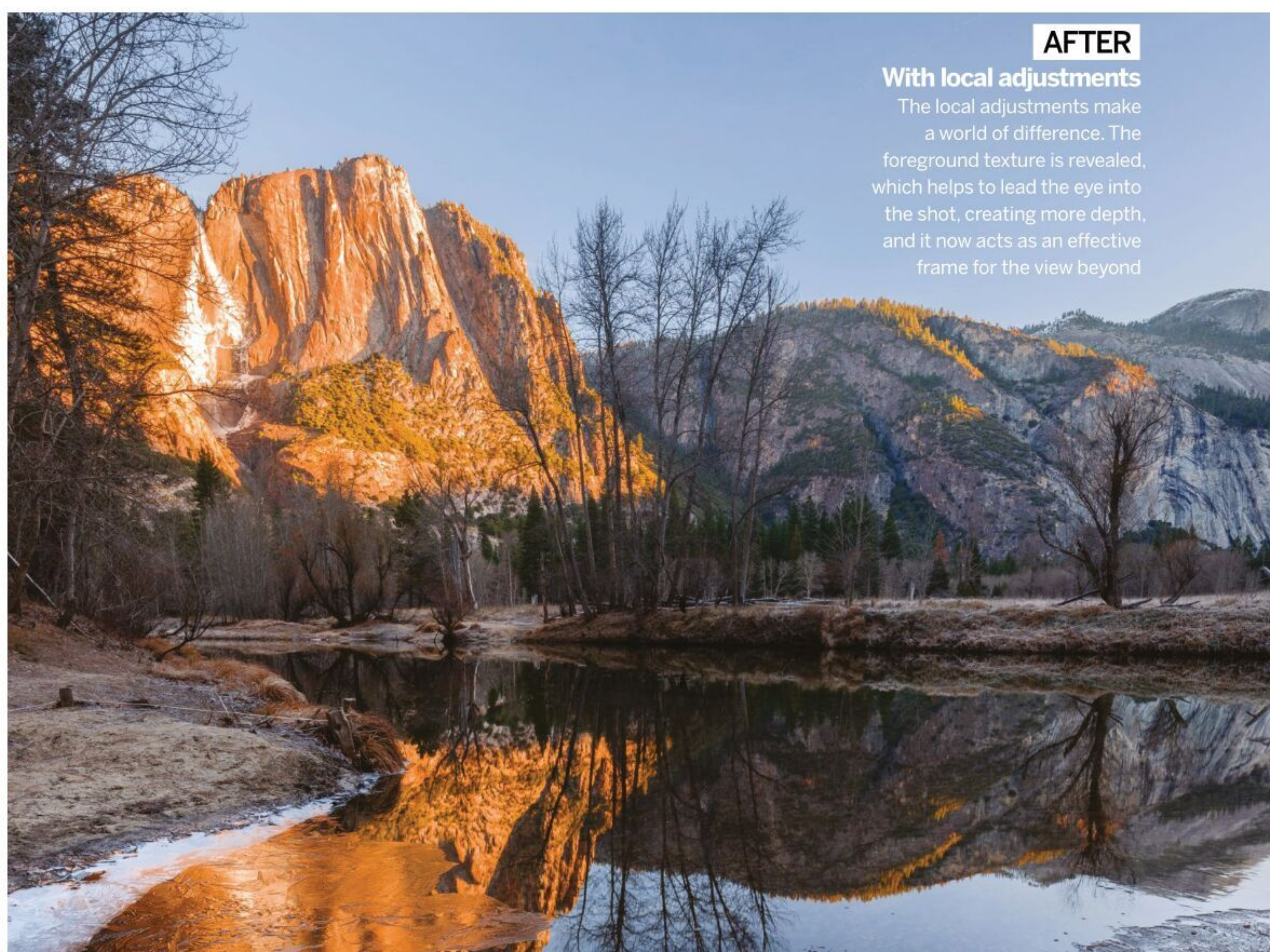
4 Creative sharpening There's not a lot of work to be done here; just a moderate amount of sharpening to bring out the texture of the distant peak. Many more enhancements are possible, including Clarity and Dehaze.



5 Further selection Now it's time for the foreground. Again, use the Adjustment Brush and Auto Mask. Checking Show Selected Mask Overlay shows where the mask is applied.



6 Selective enhancements Some extra sharpening is applied, but to really reveal the texture, clarity is added. To brighten up the area, the Whites slider is pushed to the right. The result is a beautifully textured foreground.



AFTER

With local adjustments

The local adjustments make a world of difference. The foreground texture is revealed, which helps to lead the eye into the shot, creating more depth, and it now acts as an effective frame for the view beyond

Right
Lady in red
This scene was crying out for someone to walk through it, so it was important to be as prepared as possible

All images © Lee Frost

PRO WAYS TO SHOOT MORE SPONTANEOUSLY

It can be very easy to overthink photography, perhaps now more than ever. With so many highly complex cameras out there, and such a large variety of apps and accessories, taking a photo can feel far from simple. It's easy to end up missing excellent opportunities, simply because we are concerned more by the photographic process than the outcome.

Ideally, you shouldn't need to think about the process at all. Your aim should be that you see an opportunity and photograph it almost within the same moment, and as part of the same thought process.

Of course, one of the first steps to achieving that is complete familiarity with your camera, so that you understand not

only the settings you use regularly but also those that you do not use, so that there's nothing about your camera that can get in your way. There are also various techniques that you can use to ensure that you're responsive to all possible situations. Over the next few pages, Lee Frost reveals the key considerations to ensure that you are always ready for action.

KNOW YOUR KIT

Being familiar with your camera and lenses makes all the difference

Successful photography in this digital age generally requires a fusion of technical knowledge and artistic vision. If you get this crucial balance wrong, the results are likely to be disappointing.

Technical prowess is clearly important, as the latest digital cameras are so complicated – if you don't know how to use your camera, how can you hope to take decent photographs with it? Editing software, such as Adobe Photoshop, can also be quite daunting. But if you place too much focus on the technical side of photography, the creative can suffer, resulting in images that are technically perfect, but creatively dull. You can spend as much time as you like planning a shot, waiting for the light, using the highest-resolution cameras and sharpest lenses, and then sit at your computer for hours playing with layers and luminosity masks – but that doesn't mean the final image will be interesting.

In complete contrast, there are photographers out there who know virtually nothing about the technical side of the craft, use basic equipment, have never owned a tripod, don't even know what an ND grad is, yet produce the most stunning creative work. Ideally, you should find a balance between these two aspects, so you can produce images that are technically of a high standard but also creative and inspiring. Try to adopt a more casual, spontaneous approach to photography. Use technology to free up your brain so you can follow your instincts and respond quickly to opportunities, rather than tie you down so you're creatively restrained.

Don't over-think before taking your photographs either – adopt a 'shoot now, think later' attitude. This freestyle approach can yield great rewards, especially when fleeting photo opportunities present themselves.

Being spontaneous also means being more open-minded about the subjects you shoot and the techniques you employ. Experimentation is vital to creative development. If you stick to the same old, year-in, year-out, eventually you'll become stale and uninspired and your photographs will reflect this. By trying something new, taking creative risks and being prepared to fail, you'll keep the passion alive and produce better work at the same time.





Always carry a camera

How many times have you been on the way home from work, out walking the dog, picking up the kids from school, or carrying out any number of other mundane, everyday tasks, only to say to yourself, "Damn, if only I had a camera with me"?

A beautiful rainbow suddenly appears, the sky erupts with colour at sunset, someone walks down the street in fancy dress or a police raid happens right before your eyes. Whether it's scenic beauty, humour or high drama, we've all found ourselves wishing we had a camera to capture the unexpected – and it's even more frustrating when you're a photographer in that situation.

The good news is you don't need to lug around a full DSLR kit everywhere you go, or even your prized digital compact. A phone will do. The latest smartphones have amazing cameras built in that produce sharp, well-exposed images in all lighting conditions; the quality is high enough for you to print or publish the results and you can carry one in your pocket without knowing it's there.

Another benefit of always carrying a camera is that you'll observe the world differently. You'll see everything through the eyes of a photographer, which means there's less chance of great opportunities being missed – and of course, you'll have the means to capture those opportunities.

Top

Quick on the draw

You need to be fast and accurate to take shots like this – the margin for focus error is tiny and timing must be spot on

Far left

Autofocus

Understanding your camera's AF system is vital if you aim to take successful shots of moving subjects that are both technically competent and creatively inspiring

Left

On guard

The better you know your equipment, the more you can concentrate on the creative side of photography – which is what usually makes all the difference



Use auto exposure bracketing

If you're working in tricky light and there's a risk of exposure error, use your camera's Auto Exposure Bracketing (AEB) to automatically shoot a sequence of frames at different exposures.



MASTER YOUR MACHINE

Take control of your camera instead of letting it take control of you

More great photo opportunities are missed while we fiddle around with camera controls than for any other reason, so if you want to be a more spontaneous photographer, you need to be familiar with your equipment.

The key is to have your camera set up so it's as quick and easy to use as possible, and also to minimise the number of different settings and functions you use so there's less chance of setting the wrong one.

For example, your camera will have several metering patterns – spot, partial, centre-weighted and multi-zone – but the most reliable for general use is multi-zone, so set it, leave it set and ignore the others. It won't give perfect exposures every time, but by sticking with it you'll soon learn to recognise those situations where it might slip up, and you can

give it a helping hand – either by using AEB to shoot an exposure bracket, or by dialling in some exposure compensation.

When it comes to choosing an exposure mode, there are two main priorities. If you need to control depth of field – when shooting portraits, for example – use aperture priority mode so you can set the aperture while the camera chooses the shutter speed. If you need to control motion, to freeze or blur your subject, then use shutter priority mode so you can set a specific shutter speed while the camera sets the aperture.

Program mode sets both the aperture and the shutter speed, which may seem useful, but in reality it doesn't give priority to either and so takes control away from you. Manual mode is slow and more prone to exposure error, so

for spontaneous shooting, avoid it. Full Auto, otherwise known as 'idiot mode', is also a waste of time.

If you tend to use specific settings on a regular basis, they can be set as a Custom Function (CF). You can also change the functionality of certain buttons and dials so that they perform different tasks. This varies widely from camera to camera, so it's worth checking your owner's manual; you can change functions such as which dial alters the aperture or shutter speed, or if a half-press of the shutter button activates the metering and AF, or either one, and so on. Sport, nature and street photographers tend to find these features handy as it allows them to customise the camera to suit their way of working. When using these controls becomes second nature,



PRO WAYS TO SHOOT MORE SPONTANEOUSLY

Make your camera quick to use

Essential settings for success

If you're going to be shooting in an environment where light levels are likely to change and your subject is moving, set up your camera so as many features as possible are automated – but retain some control over image quality.



1 Auto ISO
These settings allow you to set an ISO range with a maximum and minimum, such as 100-1600. The camera will automatically adjust the ISO within this range.



2 Minimum shutter speed This lets you tell the camera what the slowest shutter speed you want it to set is, such as 1/1,000sec, so you know you can freeze subject movement.



3 Set AI Focus
This AF mode automatically switches between One Shot and Servo AF depending on if your subject is stationary or moving. It's useful for unpredictable movement.



4 RAW and JPEG capture If you select both, every shot you take will be recorded as a RAW file and a JPEG. This means you can choose either to save processing time.



5 Choose a picture style If you intend to produce black and white images, set your camera to shoot in RAW and JPEG and also select Monochrome picture style.

Far left

Exposure

Situations like this are an exposure nightmare, so the better you know your camera's features, the greater your chances for a successful shot

Left

On the road again

Never let your guard down – especially when travelling – as you never know when a great photo opportunity will arise

you won't even have to think before shooting and the chances of missing a great photo opportunity will be greatly decreased.

Making sure that an image is sharply focused is one of the fundamentals of photography. For static subjects achieving this is a doddle, but if your subject's moving,

manual and work through the options. If all you've done until now is manage with a single, central AF point, you'll be amazed at what you can achieve once you start exploring some of the other options on offer.

Even if you do like to work with a single AF point, it doesn't have to stay central – learn

you're using will kick in when required to effectively make the AF target bigger. If you don't need to focus on a very specific area, select an AF pattern that contains more focus points so the chance of accurate focus is increased – and learn how to move that cluster of AF points around the frame when you need to focus on an area that's off-centre.

When you don't have a specific focus point to worry about, make all the AF points in your camera active so that autofocus is quicker. Some cameras have AF 'case settings' that change the rate of subject tracking, AF point auto switching and so on to deal with the different types of moving subject – for example, those that move erratically in different directions, or those that accelerate/decelerate quickly.

You can often customise your camera's AF settings if you tend to shoot specific and unusual subjects on a regular basis – maybe birds in flight or certain sporting events.

“The key is to have your camera set up so it's as quick and easy to use as possible”

it's not so – and the faster the movement/smaller the subject, the more difficult it gets! Thankfully, technology is here to help us. Modern autofocus is amazing, and if you make the effort to really understand your own camera's AF system, then you'll be one step closer to becoming a much more spontaneous photographer.

All you need to do is sit down for half an hour with your camera and instruction

how to adjust its position with the camera at eye level so you can quickly change the point of focus while shooting. This applies to both static and moving subjects where the point of focus is off-centre, and is a particularly useful skill if you're using a telephoto lens/wide aperture, both of which restrict depth of field and the margin for focus error. Experiment with AF-point expansion or 'Focus Assist', where other AF points around the main one

MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR LENSES

Wide, telephoto, prime, zoom – the choice is yours

You've probably never been in a situation where you've thought, "I wish I had a few more megapixels for this shot", but it's quite common to wish you had a longer, wider or faster lens. Lenses make your creative vision possible more than anything else, so getting to know them, learning how to use them and becoming familiar with their strengths and weaknesses is vital.

Both zoom lenses and primes have their relative pros and cons, so ultimately it depends which side of the fence you're on. Prime lenses offer higher image quality (if only marginally), they're usually smaller and lighter than zooms and in many cases have a wider maximum aperture. But they're also more expensive pro rata, as you need more lenses to cover important focal lengths, and are less versatile as the focal length is fixed.

Zoom lenses offer multiple focal lengths in one lens, so you can cover a big range with just two or three zooms – which means fewer lenses to buy and carry, less lens changing, quicker operation and more precise

composition. The downside of zooms is that they're usually bigger and heavier than primes, the maximum aperture tends to be smaller and optically they're not as sharp. That said, the image quality offered by pro-level zooms these days is fantastic.

The majority of photographers opt for zoom lenses, simply because their pros outweigh the cons. For spontaneous photography, zooms are brilliant, allowing you to grab shots without having to move from the spot to get more or less in – just a flick of the wrist is all that's needed. For general use a trio of zooms covering focal lengths from 16-300mm will be more than adequate.

Be sure to practise using your lenses so you get used to how they feel, their weight and balance, and so you can find the zoom and focusing rings with the camera at your eye for quicker operation.

There can still be times when manual focusing is preferable and maybe even more reliable. For example, if you want to capture a moving subject when it reaches a specific



Minimum shutter speeds

How fast or slow does your shutter speed need to be?

Handheld, the minimum shutter speed you can use will depend not only on how steady your hand is, but how big and heavy the lens is, as well as the focal length of that lens. The longer the focal length and the bigger/heavier the lens, then the faster the shutter speed must be.

As a rule of thumb, use a shutter speed similar to the focal length – so 1/30sec for 28/35mm, 1/60sec for 50mm, 1/100sec for 100mm, 1/200sec for 200mm and so on. If you have a particularly steady hand you can maybe reduce this. If your lenses have image stabilisation, you can reduce it even further. Your best bet is to conduct some tests with your lenses, to see what the slowest shutter speeds are that still enable you to produce sharp images that don't suffer from camera shake – you might be surprised just how slow they are!



One lens only

Try spending the day with a single lens, maybe a standard zoom, such as a 24-70mm. You'll get to know that lens much better in terms of the focal length range it offers and what that range is good for.

point, pre-focusing can be used. This simply involves manually focusing on the point you've chosen, then firing the shutter fractionally before your subject reaches the point. It works for sporting events and wildlife where your target follows a predictable path, but can also be used successfully for street photography.

Zone focusing is another manual focusing technique often used by street photographers, as it increases the probability of bagging a sharply focused shot and also reduces the risk of being spotted by your subject. You can shoot without looking through your camera's viewfinder – from the hip, for example.

Zone focusing works on the basis that if you pre-focus your lens on a specific distance, a 'zone' of sharp focus will be created from the depth of field you get with a specific focal length/aperture combination. Providing that your subject is in that zone, it will be sharply focused.

The wider the lens you use and the smaller the lens aperture, the greater the sharp focus zone will be. For example, with a full-frame DSLR, if you use a focal length of 28mm set to f8 and focused manually on a point 2.5m/8ft away, the zone of sharp focus will extend from approx 1.6m/5.5ft to 4.5m/15ft. If you stop down to f11 or f16, then that sharp zone will be bigger.

This technique works well for street photography as wide-angle lenses are often used to capture people from close range. You may need to use a high ISO of 800 or 1600 to achieve f8 and a decent shutter speed, but that's not a problem in terms of image quality with the latest digital cameras. If your lenses don't have any distance scales, as many don't these days, you'll have to guess the focusing distance for zone focusing. You should be able to guess short distances with a fair degree of accuracy – up to 3m, say.

To practise, maybe put some markers on the ground, guess how far away they are then actually measure that distance with a tape measure – or measure specific distances such as 1m, 2m, 3m, mark them with pegs in the ground and study them, to remember what those distances look like to you.



Far left

The Three Amigos

A standard lens is ideal for street photography, as it gives you wide-angle to short telephoto options with the flick of your wrist

Above

Havana dawn

Use your telezoom to compress perspective and add impact to a scene. The silhouette of the woman and her dog makes all the difference in this shot

Left

Barbershop quartet

Zone focusing is a handy technique to use when you need to shoot fast without being spotted

The nifty fifty This classic lens is still ideal for spontaneous photography

Back in the good old days of photography, when you bought an SLR it usually came bundled with a 50mm standard lens. This all changed when zooms took over, but many photographers still like to keep a 50mm prime in their kit, as it's such a versatile lens.

As well as being small and light, so it's easy to handhold, and razor sharp thanks to its simple optical design, the humble 50mm is also cheap as chips – just £100-130 will get you a brand new model from the likes of Canon and Nikon. Not only that, the

50mm lens is also incredibly 'fast', with a maximum aperture of f1.8, f1.4, and even f1.2 in some cases.

This makes it brilliant for handheld photography in low light, as you can open the aperture right up and manage a decent shutter speed without needing an excessive ISO. Your camera's AF system will focus quicker and more accurately too in poor light. Pop a 50mm prime on a crop-sensor DSLR and the focal length also increases to 75mm +/-, making it a handy portrait lens.





Above & below
Portrait power
 The key to great portraiture is being able to act fast and get the shot

Opposite top
Hip shots
 It may be tricky, but when shooting from the hip works, it really works!



HOW TO SHOOT MORE SPONTANEOUSLY

Improve your hit rate by photographing subjects that stretch your skills

The least spontaneous photographers tend to be those who shoot landscapes and architecture. These static subjects require patience and control; you take your time, watch and wait. Tripods and filters are the order of the day and rushing isn't an option.

If this sounds like you, perhaps it's time you tried something where you had to think on your feet, shoot without a tripod, work fast and rely on your instincts? Those skills can then be applied to the subjects you normally shoot, and you may discover a whole new way of working that refreshes your photography.

Landscapes can be spontaneous. The most dramatic lighting conditions tend to be unplanned. They occur quickly, without warning – sunlight suddenly breaking through a stormy sky, a colourful rainbow arching across the scene. You need to act quickly to capture these moments, but if you're incapable of functioning without a tripod, or you get your filters in a twist, you'll miss them and your photography will suffer. Meanwhile, the more casual shooter who rarely takes landscape photographs bags a winner without breaking sweat.

So how about breaking out of your comfort zone and trying something new that demands spontaneity? Street photography is a good one, or sport, or wildlife. Failing that, get into the habit of heading out without a tripod and a backpack full of kit and just observe the world around you. Photograph whatever catches your eye – details, abstracts, the play of light and shade, beautiful light on a scene.

The things you photograph don't necessarily have to be moving. This is more about you adopting a more spontaneous approach – seeing something and instinctively photographing it. The images you capture won't always be award-winners, but over time you'll naturally become more observant and spontaneous, and as time goes on the need for control will lessen.

A great way to start is just by using your camera more, so it becomes familiar. If you mainly work with a tripod you won't even know what your camera feels like in your hands, so get into the habit of handling your camera, using the main controls, so that it becomes

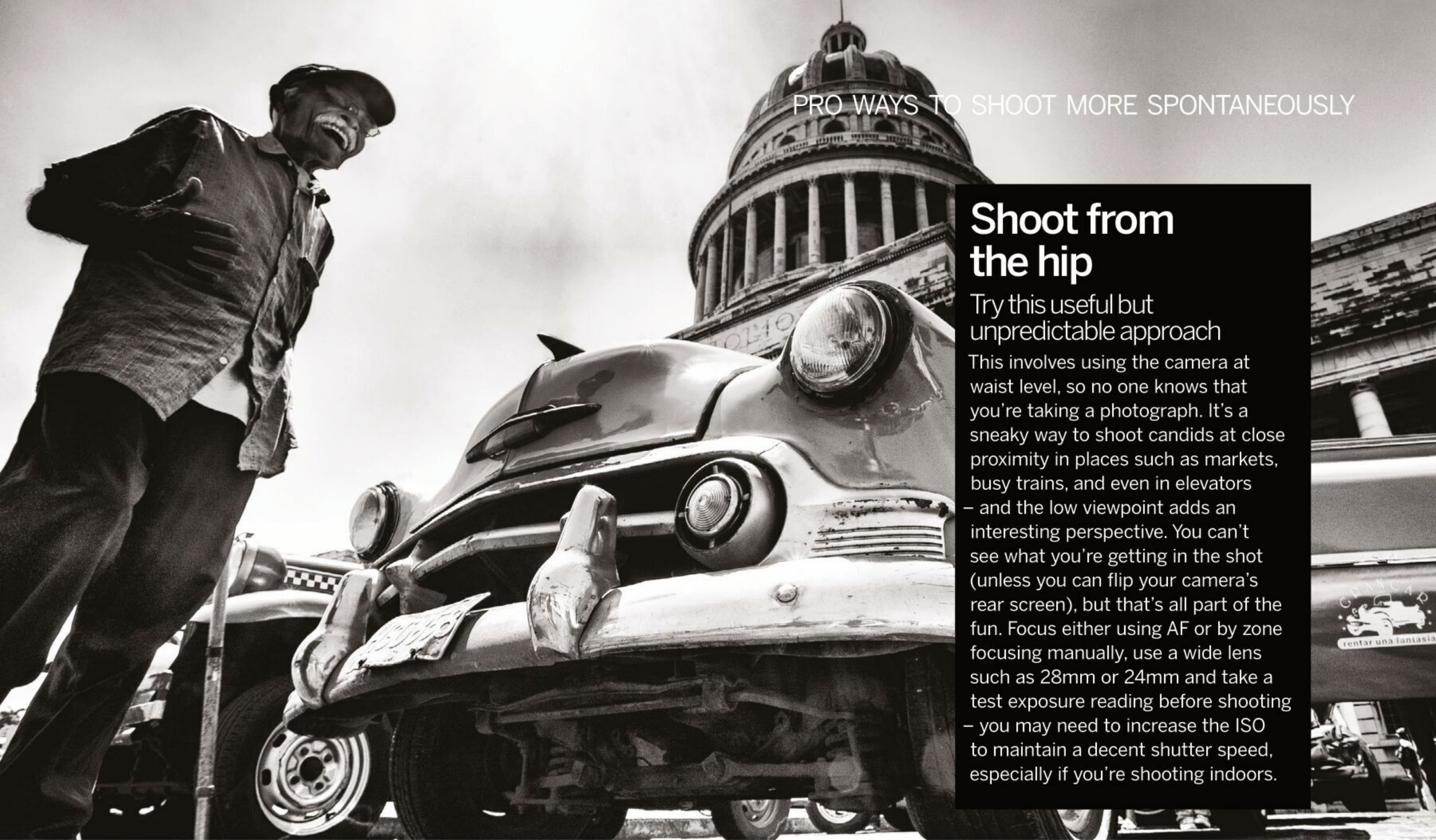
second nature. If you're shooting in changeable conditions or your subject is moving, you should ideally be able to change the exposure and AF functions with the camera at eye level, so you never lose sight of your subject. This might sound like a big ask, but it's actually quite easy if you practise and can make all the difference when you need to act fast.

Panning is a great technique to try. It's fairly easy to get the hang of, will help you to hone your skills and the resulting images look great. Try it on cars, animals, cyclists,

“Break out of your comfort zone”

your kids, at sporting events – anything that moves can be panned. All you do is pick a subject that's crossing your path, follow it through your camera's viewfinder by swinging the camera, and fire the shutter while you're moving so the background blurs but your subject comes out sharp (ish). Don't worry if your subject blurs as well – this can look great as it captures a greater sense of motion. Use Servo/continuous AF when you track your subject, so your lens will continually adjust focus to keep it sharp, and use a slow speed to introduce the blur. For a cyclist try 1/15sec, for a car try 1/30sec. Experiment with speeds faster or slower than this and see how you get on. It's a little hit and miss in terms of success rate, but great fun.

Portrait photography should be spontaneous, so that you can capture natural expressions and work quickly so your subject doesn't get bored. However, you also need to take control of the situation. This is especially the case when shooting on location. Pay attention to the environment and make mental notes before even approaching your subject, so you can be as prepared as possible. Is the lighting okay, or would it be better if you moved your subject to a different position? What about the background – too cluttered? Will you need to shoot at a wide aperture to throw the background out of focus? And then there's light levels to consider – will a high ISO be required?



Shoot from the hip

Try this useful but unpredictable approach

This involves using the camera at waist level, so no one knows that you're taking a photograph. It's a sneaky way to shoot candids at close proximity in places such as markets, busy trains, and even in elevators – and the low viewpoint adds an interesting perspective. You can't see what you're getting in the shot (unless you can flip your camera's rear screen), but that's all part of the fun. Focus either using AF or by zone focusing manually, use a wide lens such as 28mm or 24mm and take a test exposure reading before shooting – you may need to increase the ISO to maintain a decent shutter speed, especially if you're shooting indoors.

Hit the streets

A step-by-step look at how reportage images take shape

In a park in central Havana, Cuba, local men gather to discuss and debate a subject of national importance – baseball! The situation can get quite heated, to the point that as an onlooker, you expect violence to break out any moment! In reality, it's harmless banter and makes a great subject for spontaneous street photography.



1 Spot potential A crowd gathers and raised voices can be heard. This initial shot was taken from a distance as it was unclear whether the gathering would be friendly or hostile to a photographer.



2 Get closer Moving in for a closer look, a debate is in full flow between local men. Lots of animated facial expressions and waving of arms, and the sight of a camera seems to encourage them!



3 Watch and observe This one man in the checked shirt is particularly vocal and seems to verbally attack anyone who objects to his point of view. He's clearly okay to be photographed and starts to attract a crowd.



4 Work wide The debate gets more lively when another man steps in and challenges him. A face-off begins. The shots are being taken from just a few feet away with a 17-40mm zoom at 40mm.



5 Keep snapping The debate gets even livelier as the two men lock horns while onlookers watch and listen. This goes on for more than an hour before the crowds disperse and everyone gets on with their day.

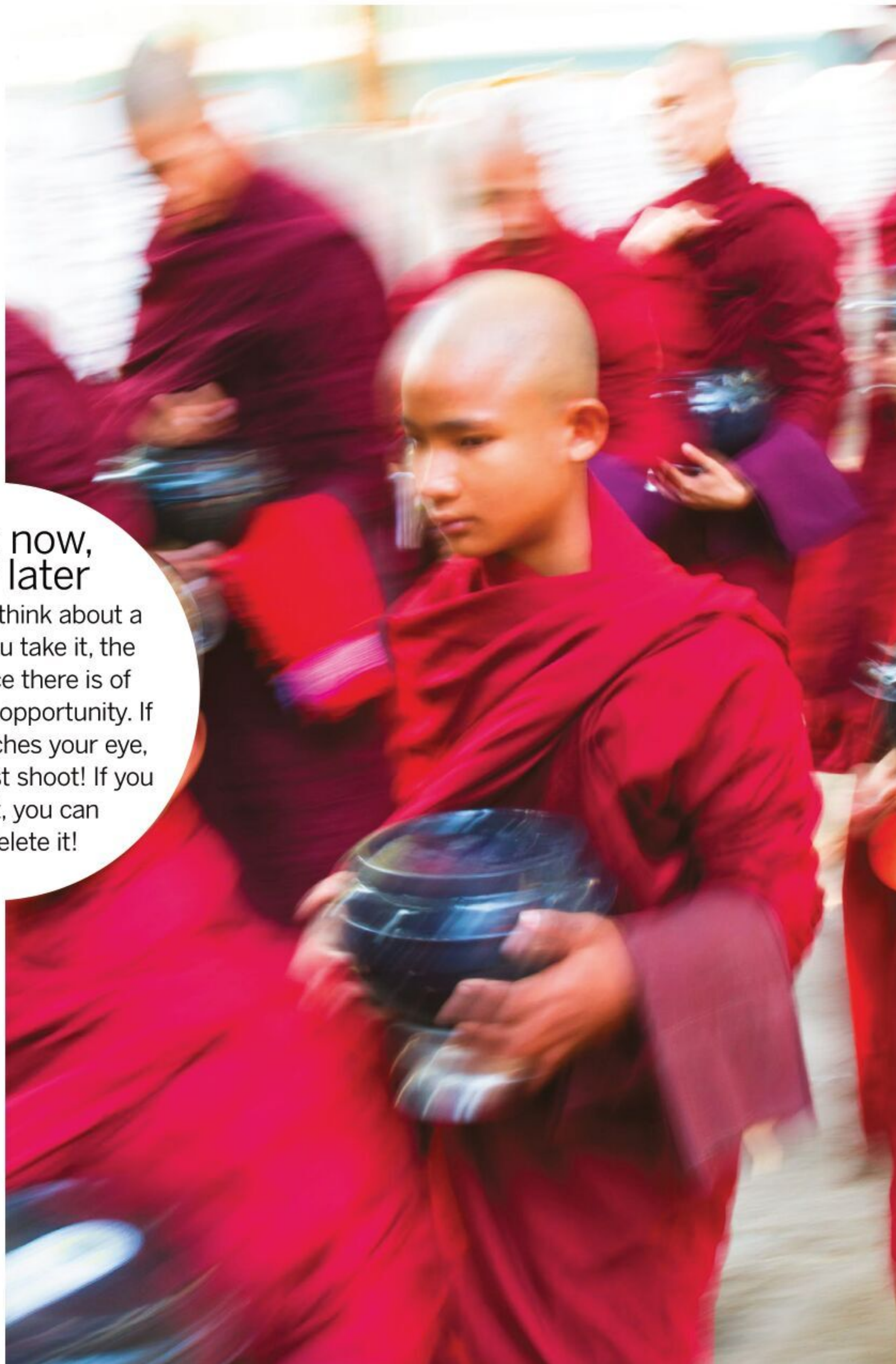


Above
Discussing baseball
Street photographers often prefer black and white as it's more direct and dramatic. This shot was converted using Silver Efex Pro 2



Shoot now, worry later

The more you think about a shot before you take it, the greater chance there is of missing a great opportunity. If something catches your eye, don't think – just shoot! If you don't like it, you can always delete it!



EXPAND YOUR CREATIVE RANGE

The more spontaneous you are, the more creative your photography will be

The biggest factor that hinders creativity is getting distracted and bogged down by technical matters. Which button does what, how to correct exposure error, which AF setting to use... The more time you spend thinking about how to use your camera and lenses, the less time you'll have to make creative decisions and the more likely you are to miss fleeting opportunities. Once you become familiar and fluent with your equipment, however, the more confident and spontaneous you'll be, because you'll be able to make quick decisions and act on them.

The most successful photographers tend to be the ones who take the most creative risks, who are willing to try something even if there's only a 10 per cent chance of it being successful. Why not? What is there to lose? Back in the days of film, every time you pressed the shutter button you were spending money, so photographers tended to be more cautious. However, in this digital age you can be much more carefree, because

photographs are effectively free. You also get instant feedback, so if you take a creative risk you'll know immediately if it has paid off or not – and if not, you can usually figure out what went wrong and can correct your mistakes there and then until you end up with a successful image.

This is why techniques such as astro photography, intentional camera movement and the use of extreme ND filters have become so popular – digital capture has taken the guesswork away and made them accessible. Digital photography is creatively liberating. It frees you up to push your creative boundaries as far as you want to, and the more you do it, the more spontaneous you will then become.

A further advantage of trying out new techniques is that you can add them to your creative repertoire, and this in turn increases the likelihood of you producing successful images every time you head out (or in) with a camera.

For example, if you plan a day's photography and on the day the weather is cloudy and dull, you could decide to shoot images with the intention of converting them all to black and white, or head to the coast and shoot minimalist long-exposure images with your Big Stopper – both ideas suit dull weather. If you find yourself wandering around aimlessly, devoid of inspiration, all you need to do is tap into your list of favourite creative techniques and give them a try – experiment with slow shutter speeds, shoot reflections, take photographs through glass, work on a theme such as doors or windows or spiral staircases. If you're open-minded, you can always find something interesting to photograph.

Also, the more photographs you take and the more techniques you try, the more spontaneous you'll become. As soon as you spot something interesting, you'll instinctively leap into action and start making creative decisions about how you can capture it, without even realising you're doing it.



Left

Think on your feet

This shot was set up when the photographer noticed light beaming through a window. Kicking up dust enhanced the effect

Above

All change

Reflections in moving water are constantly changing, so shoot a sequence then choose your favourite

Shoot a theme

Give yourself something specific to work towards so that your photography has a goal

A great way to improve your spontaneity is by shooting 'themes', so you have a specific project to work on and a specific subject to look for. That subject could be anything – numbers, windows, a specific colour, letters of the alphabet, shapes, angles, reflections, graffiti, doors, clouds. The time limit you set could be as brief as your lunch break to the rest of your life. The point is, by setting yourself a brief, it gives you a focus and helps to improve your 'eye' for a photograph.

Make the most of a location

Use different techniques to shoot a range of creative images

These images were all shot on the same visit to a neighbourhood where many of the buildings are painted with colourful art. There was no pre-planning or pre-visualisation – it was simply a case of wandering around, shooting spontaneously and capturing anything

that looked interesting. Different lenses and creative techniques were used to add variety to the collection, and during the one-hour visit over 100 frames were exposed. This shows the variety that can be captured in a single shoot if you are willing to experiment.



1 Shoot your first impressions This wide-angle shot presents an overview of what the location was like, with all that colour and a cloudless blue sky.



2 Try a different lens When you buy a new lens, you just have to use it. This shot was taken with a 15mm full-frame fisheye to create extreme distortion.



3 Shoot colourful details Details and abstracts were there in abundance, thanks to all the colourful artwork. All that was required was to look and see.



4 Try something wacky For this shot, the camera was quickly rotated as the shutter was fired, to add circular motion blur and make the shot more abstract.



5 Keep shooting It's easy to think you've got enough shots and put your camera away, but don't give up too soon – keep looking and keep shooting.



6 Try zooming The best shot from the visit was created by 'zooming'. All you do is zoom your lens through the focal length range and fire the shutter at the same time.

TECHNIQUES

GET CREATIVE WITH *FOOD* PHOTOGRAPHY

Ewen Bell dishes out his top tips and practical advice for mastering the art of food photography



Mouth-watering
Shooting back into the light allows the detail of your subject to really pop with contrast
All images © Ewen Bell

Food photography is an easy genre to overlook, but that's a shame as it's a field that offers many creative possibilities, alongside plenty of control and attractive, colourful subject matter. There's also the chance of capturing images of food as a career, as cooking

and baking are hugely popular pastimes and recipe books and the like are being produced all the time. However, you can't just step into food photography without some prior practice and a full understanding of the techniques and key considerations involved. Like so much in photography, it's much

more complicated than it looks. This has plenty to offer in terms of setting you on the right path to success, as professional photographer Ewen Bell explores the skills and kit you need in order to shoot successful culinary creations. Turn the page to begin discovering his advice.

WORK IN GOOD LIGHT

The most common mistake is trying to shoot beautiful food in bad light

Cameras see light, not subjects, even when that subject is delicious and glistening with calories. Food photography always begins with the light. The perfect light is soft, abundant and angled. You want lots of light to play with but you definitely don't want direct sunlight streaming onto the scene. It's too harsh and too contrasty. The best table in the restaurant has the window seat, with bright daylight outside and only filtered light coming through. This scenario turns the window into a very large softbox, filling the table with useful light that offers a range of shooting angles.

The starting point is to shoot at an angle across the light source. That angle gives sufficient contrast to reveal detail in the scene, and brings up the colours. You don't have to fill in the opposite side of the scene with a bounce board, or fill-in flash, because you can brighten underexposed areas of the RAW image when you process the files. It's quicker

and more precise to fine-tune the RAW files than trying to get it perfect in-camera.

As you change your angle you create a different quality of light for the scene. The more you shoot into the light the more contrast and drama you build. Colour richness gets reduced, blacks are hardened and some areas might even blow out. That's acceptable for the purpose of style, if drama is what you're looking for. Alternatively, when you change your angle to have light coming a little more from behind you, the scene fills in more and the contrast flattens out.

By controlling the angle you shoot relative to the window, you control contrast and colour as well – even when the light is very, very soft. It won't matter how amazing your food looks on a plate if the light is not working for you. Bad light and good food still make for failed photos. In the right light, almost any scene will inspire your compositions.



Below **Scale is key**

For great food photography, go big or go home. The more you bring into the frame, the more options you have for composition

Above **Lighting**

Most situations benefit from soft, angled lighting. Direct sunlight can throw highlights and contrast into a scene

Right **Scene heroes**

When you have a fully presented table you can look for scenes within the scene that offer strong compositions



Edit your shots

Treatment of the RAW file is just as important as the subject

The most natural colours result from going easy on the saturation or even pulling back on it. If you're struggling with colour balance, it's likely you have saturation dialled up too high.

In very flat light you may need to bump contrast a little in order to give hardness to edges. Adding contrast only at the black end of the histogram will help preserve tones elsewhere. Additionally, shadow detail can be lifted with the dynamic range tool to balance out the scene. Be sure to use layers to add exposure or more shadow detail if critical elements are lost in shade.



CONSIDER FLASH

Freestyling with natural light is great, but what happens when the sun goes down?

The problem with natural light when shooting food is that it isn't always very natural at all. Colour casts can be thrown across the scene by trees outside, interior lights can add colour spots to the room, and the movement of clouds throughout the day can cause dramatic changes to contrast and colour temperatures. You'll never get a nice, clean white light unless you bring your own.

Flash gear will bring consistency to your photography and reduce processing effort. Reliable strobes deliver the exact colour and quantity of light from one frame to the next. If you're shooting content across several days but need the look and feel of each frame to be consistent, then studio flash is the way to go. Aside from being very practical and reliable, once you get your flash gear under control you can concentrate even better on your creativity.

Scale is critical here. Just as we enjoy soft, abundant, angled light in the window seat of a restaurant, we try to achieve that same result in the studio. A large softbox is

required, powered by a sufficiently capable light source. 100W of flash is more than enough to shoot a table scene and pull out moments of inspiration within it. Battery-powered Speedlites can do the job, but you'll burn through the batteries and they are painfully slow to regenerate as the power drains. For the same price as a decent Speedlite you can buy monoblock kits that offer a plug-in unit with in-built receiver. Just connect to the mains power and slip the trigger unit onto your camera.

A reliable light source is essential, and so is consideration for how you want to shape the light. Softboxes for food photography should be very large and have generous amounts of internal diffusion. You need to get the softbox close to the scene, as close as possible to keep the light as diffused as possible. If your light-shaping boxes are not soft enough, and too much contrast is coming through to the scene, simply add an additional diffusing screen between the food and the flash.

Below
Monobloc studio lights
These are reliable and affordable. They will fire all day long so you can focus on the creative task

Right
Soft light
The basic studio setup is soft light thrown from one side of the set. You can vary the angle to generate more or less contrast

Far right
Controlled
Shaping the light is where the science becomes art, filling your scene with just the right amount of contrast



Stop motion

Consistent lighting from flash gear is the perfect match for making short stop-motion clips of the assembly or presentation of a dish. Studio flash is perfect for capturing step-by-step frames to build stop motion.

Lock down the camera to a tripod and lock off the focus and exposures. You need the same light and exposure for every scene. Make small adjustments between frames to mimic a scene in motion. Process the RAW files to perfection before you output the individual frames. Bring the stills into your video editing tool and use soft transitions to smooth the motion.





Above left
Window seat

In natural light, shoot across the scene for colour, or shoot back into the scene a little bit to build contrast and drama

Above
People as props

Perhaps capture some hands coming into frame, or step back and let a generous smile add something vibrant to the mood

Above right
Schneider 50mm f2.8 PC-TS

Tilt-shift lenses offer the ability to throw your place of focus at any angle you want

Right
Step back, too

'Get closer' is often good advice, but you may find getting too close simply means you're missing more complex compositions

SELECT A LENS

All the magic happens at 50mm

The field of view from a 50mm lens is the sweet spot for still life photography, including food. As your field of view goes wider, such as 35mm, you start getting perspective issues. The wider you shoot the closer you need to get, which can further exaggerate perspective. It also gets difficult to control the background with a wider lens; you don't always want the rest of the room to be drawn into the frame.

Narrowing the field of view with a telephoto lens can be a problem too. Longer focal lengths, such as 100mm, will compress the scene – you lose a sense of depth and the compositions look flat. Longer lenses also create logistical problems when working in confined spaces, as you may not have the room to step back far enough for a shot. It all works much better when you start with 50mm.

If you're shooting on a full-frame sensor the other advantage to 50mm is that there are lots of affordable primes on the market. An aperture of f2 is the sweet spot. It's tempting to use a 24-70mm f2.8 if you already have one, but then you won't be seeing the full effect

of a prime at f2 and you have to deal with a clunky, big lens which can be a drag on your creative process.

The equivalent lens for APS-C sized cameras is a 35mm f1.4, or for micro four thirds the 25mm f1.4. The smaller your camera sensor the greater the depth of field you get at the same f-stop, so you may want to experiment all the way to f1.4 instead of f2 with the smaller camera bodies.

The difference between f2 and f2.8 is significant for background bokeh, and it's even more pronounced at f4. Shooting shallow is about bringing attention to one element in the scene, and hence the degree to which you melt away the rest of the scene is essential to your composition. Your DOF expands as you step back from the subject too, so the bigger the scene you shoot at 50mm, the further south you may have to drop the f-stop to work the bokeh. Shooting at f4 might look dramatic when your frame is the size of a tea cup, but offers zero impact once you step back to capture a full table setting.

Perfect the focus

There's less room for error when shooting shallow DOF, so you need to take control of your AF

- 🔍 Be aware that working with shallow depth of field means slight focus errors will ruin a frame.
- 🔍 Select one focus point instead of a patch. Keep it small and fixed.
- 🔍 Employ the focus lock using the shutter button half-press or rear focus method.
- 🔍 Recompose after you lock focus to achieve the composition you want.
- 🔍 Look for a hero within the scene, one with strong elements that deserves to own the focus.
- 🔍 Keep a generous amount of background scene so we can enjoy the bokeh.



GET CREATIVE WITH FOOD PHOTOGRAPHY



CONSIDER SCALE

Size matters, so shoot the table, not the dish

We have a tendency with a lens in hand to keep stepping inwards, trying to tighten the composition by cutting out all the things we don't want in the scene. This is a reductive process. We end up with very simplistic compositions and no idea where we went wrong. The trick to building richer and more detailed compositions with still life and food is to step back and bring more into the frame, not less. It's not just a matter of a different lens, it's a different perspective.

Thinking bigger is better. We get obsessed with what's on the plate without realising that there is a bigger scene on offer. As you step back a little you find yourself shooting the table, not the dish. Now you have options for your compositions. Step back a little further and you have a restaurant, not just the table. At each level of scale you get different options for composition. Stepping back lets you put the dish into a bigger context, with room to include a sense of place. When working in the studio it's a common mistake to keep the scale small. Limiting yourself to a fraction of a bench, or a small piece of plywood you painted to look like weathered timber, is limiting your creativity as well. For big results you need to think bigger than a bread box.

Expanding the scale of your shoot zone also enables you to make room for multiple dishes. One plate offers far fewer options than two or three. With multiples of the same dish on a table or studio bench, you create the potential for layered compositions. As you move around you'll find shots within the scene, and those multiples of a dish give you multiple moments of inspiration.

Top
Shallow depth of field

Shallow DOF is a powerful tool for composition. Anything outside the plane of focus is rendered soft and mellow

Middle
Lighting styles

Backlighting brings extra contrast and drama to a scene, and requires different applications of processing styles

Bottom
Add people to the shot

Nothing adds interest to food photography like people, bringing depth and story to what would otherwise be a static moment

Far right
Shooting angle

Shooting top-down brings a different perspective, but be aware of whether the light is working for you or against you



Include a little action

Still life doesn't have to be still when it comes to food. Get a little movement into the scene and bring it to life

Capturing motion with your scenes adds impact to good composition. For example, the pouring of liquids, steam rising off hot pancakes, or simply sprinkling salt onto a dish.

Additionally, the preparation of food and the people who make it are great elements to a photo series.

Messy is magic. A sense of the chaos in a kitchen or ingredients on a workbench add interest.

STYLE THE SHOT

Make sure your subject looks good enough to eat

Building an interesting composition lies in a spectrum of approaches, with food styling at one end and photojournalism at the other. You can either create the exact scene you want from scratch using props and styling, or you can look for moments within a scene that already exists in the real world. The best results often come from somewhere in between the two.

Styling is a dedicated skill. On a commercial shoot the stylist can actually earn more than the photographer. Stylists supply their props and ideas, and typically the concept of the overall shoot rests most heavily in their hands. The photographer will have to take their lead, manipulate the light to their advantage, and ensure that the final scene is technically competent.

As a photographer it is a joy to work with a good stylist, because they carry so much of the creative load. With the stylist preparing the scene, this will then enable you to devote your attention to the task of finding the ideal composition. For one person to achieve both photography and styling can be demanding, as your brain is jumping between two tasks and you may not be able to successfully complete either to satisfaction.

When shooting on location it's important to consider how much of the original character from the restaurant or kitchen you want to pull through into the images. Photojournalism style dictates that you reveal the nature of your subject, while styling is an attempt to create it through art. In practice there is always a degree of both.

I like to 'shoot around the scene' when I visit a location. I ask the staff to set tables as they would for guests, and to present dishes with wines poured. I want to see how they present their work. With a fully dressed table I then start to look for moments within the scene. I seek out a hero and dig out compositions that pull through multiple elements. And then I might start styling the table a little. Not a lot, but a little. I make adjustments, I remove distractions, and I add layers to the background.

I do this with location shoots, and when working with a stylist in the studio. Bringing these two approaches together yields diversity in the images you collect, and opens the door to innovative compositions that are unexpectedly rewarding.

Below left
50mm

You don't need a DSLR camera to shoot great food photography, but you do need a fast lens that gives you the equivalent of a 50mm perspective

Below right
Sense of depth

Trimming the subject for a tight shot but also including a few objects out of focus in the background and foreground will build layers into a scene

“Consider how much of the original character from the restaurant or kitchen you want to pull through into the images”



Remember to use props

The key to great food styling is having props on hand to complement the scene

If you're planning to shoot a lot in the studio you may need to start collecting some interesting props to spice up your scenes. Ingredients to a recipe can be used as props as well as crockery and tableware.

People can also act as props as well – think about hands involved in the scene or perhaps kitchen staff handling a dish.

Scaling out to shoot wider allows room to bring those props into the composition.

The right prop can add context to a scene, like a pot of tea and cups alongside a slice of cake. Props can also be used to carefully add specific colours to a scene that embellish the hero of the shot.



Utilise props

Take time to consider props. These two scenes are taken in the same kitchen window, but offer different colour palettes. Farmhouse rustic styling with a jug of flowers versus Scandinavian 'fika time'

TAKE FULL CONTROL Advice for brilliant compositions

What makes food styling so different to most genres of photography is the degree of control you have over the subject. You can do anything you like to the scene – you can even eat it. It's easy to control the light over a scene the size of a table, compared to shooting a full studio set or waiting for sunrise over a landscape. Food doesn't have to pull a pose or deliver an expression. It sits there and silently accepts the attention without moving. Within limits of course – do be careful with ice cream as it can melt in minutes if you're not ready for the shot.

The scale and inanimate nature of food photography means you have excellent opportunities for composition. It's a great genre to explore the use of colour, perspective and repetition. Don't feel that you need all the colours of the rainbow jammed into a single frame – instead try initially working with a limited colour palette and find ways to repeat them through the scene. And use more than one dish in your styling, taking advantage of a bigger scale and bigger ideas. Change your perspective

as you shoot. Try the top-down view but then look for different angles that reveal more or less of certain elements.

Food photography lends itself to tethered shooting. It's a good idea to work with a laptop and tether cable when in the studio or on location. It's a big advantage compared to viewing on-camera only, because you get much better feedback on subtle variations in your shots and more accurate confirmation of where your shallow depth of field is hitting. Additionally, the clarity of a large laptop screen also gives you better renderings of your compositions, complete with your preferred processing treatment as each frame rolls off the camera.

The prime rule though is to always start with the light. It doesn't matter how interesting the food is if you don't have good light. Aim for soft, abundant, angled light. As you change your perspective you can also change your angle of light. Like adding salt and pepper to a dish, your angle is adjusting the seasoning of the shot.



Capture the story

Dynamic moments add so much to the story of the image. For example, broth being poured into a noodle dish is a simple moment of completion for the chef, but is an essential capture for the photographer

SHOOT SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY

Learn to keep commercial clients happy while ensuring your images provide the greatest return

Product photography is essential to many aspects of modern life, from commercial advertising to education. Therefore, as a photographer it can be a highly lucrative genre in which to become specialised. However, there are difficulties associated with the industry – namely the high degree of competition from other photographers, and also the technical challenges of shooting images that are useful to a wide range of clients.

Common effects in product imaging often require insider knowledge and good experience to execute correctly, which is problematic when starting out. Then, once the appropriate skills have been acquired, the photographer must stand out from the competition and be visibly able to create something unique and desirable, while operating to a viable profit margin.

Here we discuss some of the most important considerations for successful and commercially appealing product photography.

Composition is one of the simplest yet most effective aspects of producing images that work for clients and return the greatest profitability. In advertising, or when shooting images for stock that are likely to be used for such purposes, it is vital to frame your shots so that users can adapt the product itself to fit with their current project. Files with plenty of space for copy, or with enough of the frame to composite on extra elements, are going to experience the greatest demand and in turn the largest number of image sales. Tightly cropped images, with little scope for expanding the canvas, appear context-specific – while they may have a clear purpose and strong appeal to a limited number of clients, they are less adaptable for widespread commercial application.



Rewarding market

Product photography has many specialisms and sub-genres to make your own, but good business sense is required to make it a fruitful pursuit

All images © Mark Colliton

TECHNIQUES

Furthermore, a facet unique to product imaging is the quality and shape of reflections. Many items have reflective surfaces, so the photographer must decide to either suppress or enhance these properties. The style of reflections can add or remove environmental context, which strongly influences how easy it is for users to place a product into a novel setting. If you have been directly commissioned to shoot for a pre-specified purpose, then maintaining context should be your priority.

Matching style to end-use is a professional skill that will generate repeat custom, since you minimise work on the customer’s part, which should always be your priority.

Another often-overlooked characteristic of a product shot is its ability to work with multiple backgrounds – mostly black and white seamless backdrops. Making shots on both is a good insurance for meeting a client brief, but also style lighting so that backgrounds can be swapped later.

Physical insurance should also be considered – if you’re going to be shooting in your own studio, research how this impacts your responsibilities and who is liable if damage or loss occurs. Check that your standard business policy covers the type and cost of the items you have in your care during the shoot.

The genre is so broad, covering a multitude of subjects, that it is impossible to be an expert in all areas. Before accepting an assignment, think about whether the product type can be tackled using your space, equipment and time. Be certain that the costs involved with executing a shoot do not outway the potential income generated. Becoming overly ambitious may not further your business’s commercial success.

File treatment

Consider how you would like your clients to receive image files

For images where the exact end use is uncertain, providing clients with a layered Photoshop file can give your work standout appeal and enable it to demand a higher price. You will often have to separate image components into layers to make local adjustments and allow compositing, so consider making a flattened JPEG or TIFF file and also offering a more expensive PSD. Some customers will appreciate being able to supplement backgrounds with speed. However, appropriate pricing is critical, as they may not have need to return to you for alternate image versions in future should you hand over complete creative control.





SHOOT SUCCESSFUL PRODUCT PHOTOGRAPHY



Top

Subtle is key

"The level of retouch should be subtle. Products should be clean and crisp but not stripped of their natural character," says Mark Colliton

Far left bottom

Simplicity

Often the simplest shots are the most effective, in terms of meeting client needs and in ease of production and image throughput

Left below

Clear focus

For images to meet client briefs the subject must be clear, highlights Mark. The product must always dominate the composition

Above

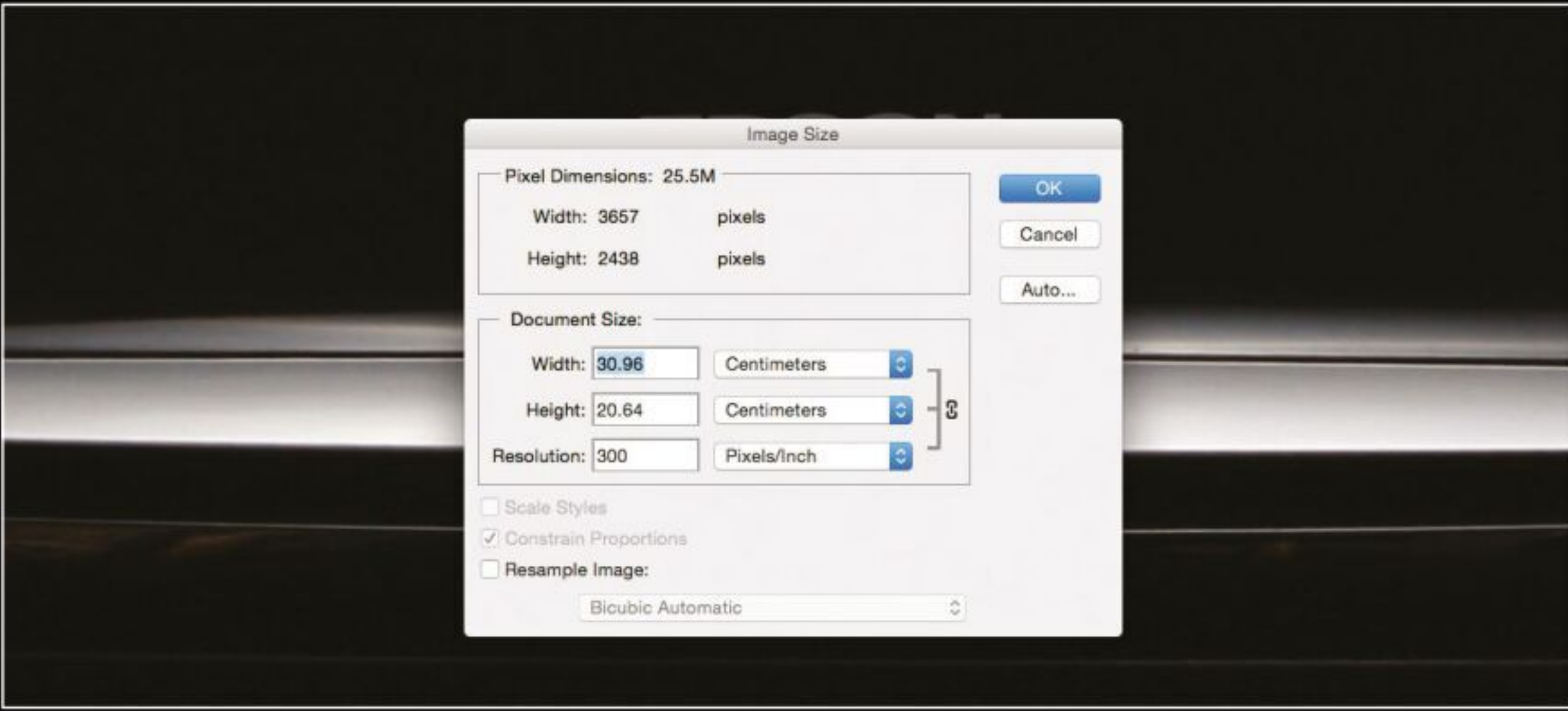
Brewdog

Mark suggests that it is important to maintain relationships with existing customers in order to secure repeat business

Remember resolution

The image files you provide must meet the standards required by your client – however, more pixels is not always better

Product photography is often about detail – the main purpose of images is to demonstrate the nature of an item, so as to offer a realistic representation of the real thing. Therefore your images need enough resolution to fulfil these requirements. However, not all users will want large files, which can impede their workflows through slow load times. Offer multiple file versions to align with client practices, and increase image turnover through repeat business and increased efficiency.



TECHNIQUES

Right
Achievability
Product imaging can be highly creative, but restrict setup and execution so that it is still achievable in a reasonable time frame

Below
Stay on budget
For larger or more ambitious shoots, form a clear budget and be sure not to stray from this. Larger investment in props, space, gear and time can produce standout images, but you must retain profitability the composition



Pro case study



Professional product photography specialist Mark Colliton (markcolliton.com) explains the challenges and rewards of the industry

How long have you been taking product images professionally?

I came to photography a bit later in my creative career than is perhaps typical. At university I studied maths, but I also had creative interests in art and film that weren't being met. I changed direction and gained experience in graphic design, which soon led to specialising as a photographic retoucher.

Being on shoots as a digital operator really sparked my desire to pursue a career as a commercial product photographer. For me training was all on the job, assisting and then freelancing in-house for large companies. For the past six years I've been running my own studio, now based in Wandsworth, London.

What are the common challenges associated with meeting a client brief?

Establishing clear communication with the client well in advance of the shoot is essential. It's important to ensure that everyone is on the same page in terms of the desired results, especially when taking on a new client.

Sometimes initial enquiries and briefs can be vague in terms of product details and shot list, so requesting full details plus reference imagery and mood boards for creative direction is advisable. Once you know what to expect, you can provide an accurate estimate, turnaround time and agree payment terms.

Also ensure that the client understands the role of post-production and retouch, which requires both time and added expense.

How do you remain competitive in the product photography market?

Be good and be seen. Get experience, find your niche and work at it. An attractive and easy-to-use website with good SEO is essential to showcase your work and encourage potential clients to get in touch. At the higher end of the industry, photographic agents can play an effective role in attracting and negotiating contracts, although this isn't essential. I'd also add that it's important to stay motivated so that you can always perform at your best – taking occasional time out from it all will usually do you good.



**Left
Cosmetics**
Mark believes that simplicity is very effective in commercial product photography, as long as lighting and composition are complementary

**Below
Diesel cologne**
Mark advises taking time out of your usual work schedule to allow you the opportunity to experiment with different styles and techniques



Mark's top tips

- 🌀 **A standout website** Get to the point where your ability speaks for itself and you have a website to reflect it. This will get you noticed and showcase what market you are in for getting jobs.
- 🌀 **Location is important** "I'm lucky to be based in central London, which comes with added competition, but proximity to a large city is advantageous, being geographically attractive to enough business types that will utilise your service."
- 🌀 **A stylish studio** Work from a nice studio as it's part of the client experience. Initially you will likely need to share a studio, but as you develop it becomes feasible to take on your own one. It's also possible to rent studios, but consider the client.
- 🌀 **Keep the client in mind** Be easy to work with. It's about the client, not you, so keep a broader view of where they're coming from. Have patience on set – keep calm even when the lighting is proving tricky.



Video pair

Destination wedding photographers Dani and Sam of Cinematic Tide tell authentic and creative stories through both stills and filming

© Sam & Dani Cinematic Tide

VIDEO SKILLS FOR PHOTOGRAPHERS

Read on to discover why, even as a stills photographer, learning video skills is an important step for your career



In the ever-competitive world of professional photography, you need plenty of skills in your arsenal to stay employable. As well as taking great images, a self-employed pro often needs to know how to retouch images, market themselves, build a website and work social media... and video is being added to the list too. Now that mirrorless cameras and DSLRs are capable of shooting video quality that was once confined to bulky specialist cameras, many photographers are also

training themselves in the art of video to offer their clients an extra level of service, and create engaging material for self-promotion. If weddings are your thing, for example, couples might want a short film alongside their album-worthy stills.

But what video skills do you need to be a competent videographer? And how do you make sure your cinematography stands out from the crowd? In this feature we'll run through the best kit for the job, the technical considerations, the best ways to

plan for a shoot and how to edit footage for the final masterpiece.

Making the change to video isn't nearly as scary or difficult as you'd think; you're likely to be using your usual camera, albeit with a few unfamiliar functions. What works for stills doesn't always work for moving image, so you'll learn to retrain your creative eye in new ways. Many of the skills are transferable between the two mediums. Read on, glean some advice from the pros, expand your repertoire and improve your career.

PLAN AND PREP

The right project brief is the first step to creating a great video

Regardless of whether you're shooting video for a personal project or a paid commission, there's no point heading out without a plan and just rolling the camera. Instead, you need a brief and a shot list, as this will ensure you take the right kit, make the most out of your time, exploit expensive or remote locations, and get the result your clients want.

First off, consider the purpose and style of your videos, as well as the intended audience. For wedding videos, at this stage you might meet with your couple to discover exactly what they want from the final product. Be specific here to avoid disappointment later. Find out what key moments of the day they want covered, how long the final video will be, whether they want specific audio covered and in what format you'll deliver the video.

Outlining the key expectations and specifications of any video shoot will help you stay on track, keep the goals clear in your mind and, if you're working with a team of photographers, ensure that everyone stays on the same page.

By its nature, video is about movement; moving people and moving images. This means that you'll have to assess the space of your locations more carefully than if you were simply shooting stills. It's always a good idea to visit a planned location at different times of day beforehand if you're able to (especially if it's indoors), as this will help you to plan the lighting, find attractive angles and see how much space you have to play with.

Take still images or sketches of the room layout, including the location of windows, to refer back to later. Then you can work out where the light is falling and what lighting kit you'll need, if any. Natural illumination is usually more flattering and requires less post-production than artificial light. Outdoors, take into account potential weather patterns, as well as how the sun falls throughout the day.

During parties, events or weddings, you might be able to assess the location at the beginning of a shoot, to position a camera on a tripod for the best composition of the key speaker, or in the case of a wedding, the aisle.





Above
Make it personal
Cinematic Tide shoot around the world, but get to know their clients via Skype calls first

Far left
Choose kit wisely
You need at least a second or two of each moment, so you must be mobile and steady if shooting handheld

Left
Know your location
Research weather and lighting conditions for video, just as you would for a stills photoshoot

Get the best kit

What are your gear options for shooting quality video?

High-end DSLR Most photographers use their existing DSLR to start shooting footage. Pro models, such as the Nikon D850, offer full-sensor-width 4K recording and uninterrupted recording for up to 30 minutes.



Mirrorless camera Video-shooting stills cameras, such as the Sony a7S II, combine a portable form factor with epic low-light performance. With in-camera stabilisation, they can produce more steady handheld shots.



Quality prime lens A prime DSLR lens like the Canon 50mm f/1.4 is compact, sharp and fast in low light. 50mm is a popular focal length for weddings.



Serious cine lens Lenses such as the Rokinon 35mm T1.5 Cine are designed with video in mind. Aperture and focus scales are marked on both sides of the lens to aid focus pulling.



Professional camcorder If video is your main output, a dedicated camcorder might be preferable to a camera. 4K options, such as the Panasonic HC-X1, have a fixed lens and optical zoom.



“Natural illumination is more flattering and requires less post-production than artificial light”

INCLUDE MOVEMENT

Incorporate smooth tracking into your filming for a more dynamic result

Movement enables you to track subjects and create feeling. Sam and Dani at Cinematic Tide (www.cinematictide.com) also think that movement is part of storytelling. "Most of our films are very dynamic, because we love the energy and excitement that comes from weddings," they say. "Choosing when to move a little or a lot depends on what's happening in the scene. We're always thinking of how this shot or movement might fit into the edit. For example, a slow tracking-in shot draws the viewer closer to what you're trying to say."

Camera movement can add a huge amount of interest to your shots, but even simple moves take time to master. "Movement is great, but can be overused," says Ellyn Cook (www.brightandbeautifulfilms.com), another pro wedding shooter. "I use a slider for a couple of bridal prep and scene-setting shots." Sometimes, the action moves too quickly for the camera to be on a tripod and this is where other stability tools come in. "I use

a monopod for dancing shots, so that they have slight movement," adds Ellyn. "I love clean, still shots, letting the people provide the movement instead of the camera."

The most basic movement is a tilt of the camera up or down, and a pan from side to side. A pedestal movement is where the camera body is physically lowered or elevated, and a zoom will, as you'd expect, enlarge parts of the scene. Tracking your subjects is the most complex; a dolly shot is one where the camera is mounted on a dolly on rails, and pushed along the track while the image is being filmed.

Another approach for filming is to have at least two cameras rolling at the same time, each covering a different angle. This way you'll be able to cut film and takes together seamlessly when editing. If the beginning of one take is better than another, for example, you can cut from one angle to another but keep the flow of the story intact.



Use a slider

Step up the technical quality of your productions for gliding smooth shots



1 Mount the slider Secure the slider track to the tripod and attach your camera using the included base. We used the portable Manfrotto 60cm camera slider.



2 Practise simple movements Move the camera from one side of the slider to the other. Try to slide the camera at a steady speed so that the motion doesn't look jerky.



3 Tweak the resistance If your model has a sensitivity knob, adjust it by turning to find the best amount of resistance. Some shots will require faster movements than others.



4 Change your view The camera doesn't have to face forwards as you pan. Turn the camera to face one end of the slider to move closer or further from subjects.



5 Play with focus As the camera moves along the slider, try changing focus from one object to another, or go from an out-of-focus area to a sharp one (and vice versa).



6 Add an angle By tilting the camera before sliding, or angling the slider itself, you can track subjects in more unusual dimensions. Use the tripod ball head attachment for this.



© Sam & Dani Cinematic Tide



© Matt Buckner

Above
The right tools
 Cinematic Tide often use a handheld gimbal to record more dynamic movements

Left
Shake-free
 Matt Buckner at Film Hive uses a Zhiyun Crane 2 single-armed gimbal for fluid movement

Below
Multiple cameras
 Andrew Michael used three cameras for this wedding coverage: one to the left, one centre and one roaming



© Sam & Dani Cinematic Tide

Key settings

Technical points to bear in mind when shooting video



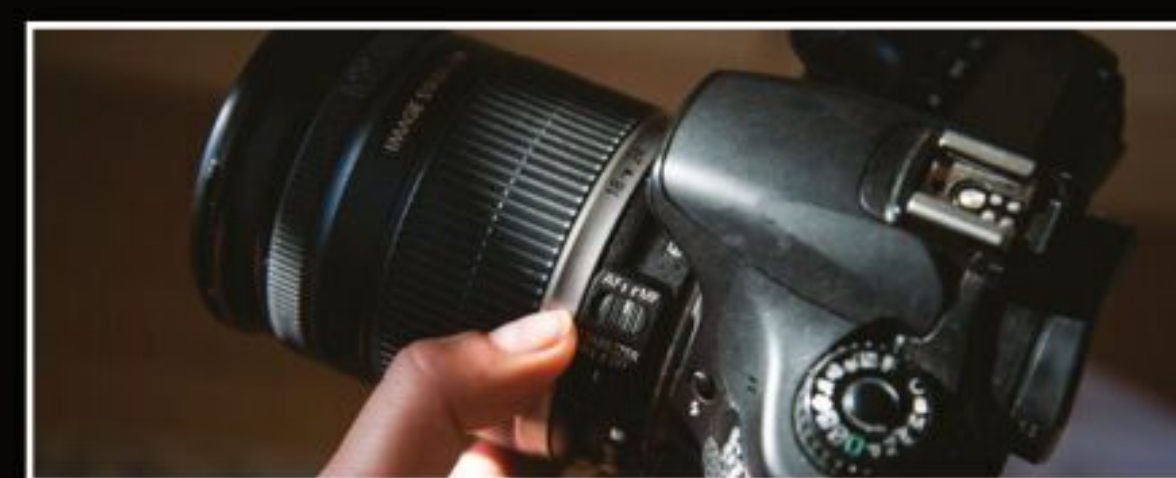
Stay manual It's best to set the shutter, aperture and ISO before you start a clip. Using manual mode means you'll avoid the exposure automatically changing halfway through.



Frame rates The frame rate will affect the feel of your footage. 25fps will give you a more cinematic quality, whereas 50fps will look more fluid and suit fast-moving subjects, like wildlife.



Set the shutter If you're shooting with a predominantly stills camera, such as a DSLR, match your shutter speed to your frame rate to avoid choppy footage. For example, at 30 fps, use 1/60sec.



Manual focus Using the camera's autofocus during filming often means that it hunts around for a subject. Focus manually so that it remains in the same place throughout the clip.



White balance Set the camera's white balance manually instead of using the automatic mode. Auto will change in between shots, taking you much longer to match shots at the editing stage.

UNDERSTAND AUDIO

Audio is half of your final video, and its quality can make a huge difference

After lighting, audio is the second element to get spot on for truly pro video quality. You can't rely on the basic microphone that's built into your camera. Instead, you need to pinpoint the sound you want to capture, and get as close as possible with a specialist mic.

For stills photographers looking to branch out, the most popular choice is a shotgun mic, which sits on top of the camera. These pick up sound directly in front of them and can be used to isolate the sound of a person talking.

Wedding filmmaker Andrew Michael (www.andrewmichaelfilms.co.uk) attaches a Zoom H1 with a small lavalier microphone to the groom, and pops a Sony TX650 digital voice recorder on each reader, along with the person conducting the ceremony. "Never rely solely on someone else's audio equipment or speaker systems," he says. "For corporate events, you might need to use more high-end audio equipment, however at a wedding you want to stay discreet and professional."

If the audio in your video brief is just as important as the visuals, aim to monitor it continuously, not just while you're setting up. Consider hiring a sound recordist to check levels as you're busy working the camera. In an interview situation, if you're the interviewer and operating the camera, it'll be easy to miss sound problems and lose the speaker. Where you can, monitor audio through headphones and listen out for any sounds that aren't coming from your intended source.

Not every single video has to include audio recordings from the shoot itself. For example, product reviews or wedding highlight videos might simply have an overlay of music.

As well as getting crisp recordings of anyone speaking, be sure to capture ambient noise from your shooting location on a separate track. Background sounds added over the top at the editing stage will make the audio as a whole sound more natural, as if the viewer were there themselves.



Avoid audio problems

Identify and overcome the challenges of recording sound

High winds Attach a decent fur windscreen to your mic to block out the majority of wind noise.

Traffic noise If your mic has a high-pass filter, turn it on to remove the low frequency of distant vehicles.

Electromagnetic radiation To minimise low humming sounds, keep audio equipment and cables far away from power supplies and lights.

Varying sound levels Sound levels peak when a speaker becomes too loud. By setting the audio level to automatic, a mic limiter prevents this.

Speaker far away Set the recording levels manually and set the level higher so that you get a good signal.

Vibrations Instead of using cheap plastic mic clips, use rubber clips to connect your mics and minimise any vibrations.



[ABOUT](#) [WEDDINGS](#) [FILMS](#) [MUSIC](#) [GEAR](#)



Whether you're editing a wedding video or a documentary, finding royalty free music can be extremely time consuming, so we started producing our own original music for our clients.

We're gradually building our own music library to help improve your video quality and we want to share our low cost royalty free music with you so that you can spend more time searching for soundtracks and more time creating our films and videos.





© Sam & Dani Cinematic Tide

Record sound

Capturing quality audio is easy with the right equipment for the job

Compact shotgun mic A wired mic, like the RODE VideoMic Pro, sits on the hotshoe of your camera. It features an optional high-pass filter and windshield.



Boom mic setup A boom mic refers to a directional mic mounted on a boom arm and positioned out of frame. The setup enables subjects to move around freely without disturbing the sound.



Lapel mic Ideal for recording interviews or vlogging, these discrete clip-on mics attach to a transmitter. The Sennheiser ew 100-ENG is a great wireless solution indoors or out.



Handheld mic The Sennheiser MD 46 is a rugged reporter mic. Handheld options pick up sound well when subjects speak into them directly, but are best kept for live 'newsy' broadcasts.



Audio recorder Zoom is known for producing quality handheld recorders. The portable H4n Pro offers four tracks of simultaneous recording in WAV and MP3 formats, and a built-in X/Y stereo microphone.



CONTACT



Above
Finding the story
Cinematic Tide record spoken narratives like vows, cards or a script written specifically for the couple to drive the story

Right below
Focus on quality
"People watch bad-quality video all the time, but they turn off a video with bad audio," says Ellyn Cook. "Have back-ups"

Left
Collaborate on audio
"When there's a budget for it we create [original] custom music for certain projects," says Matt Buckner of Film Hive

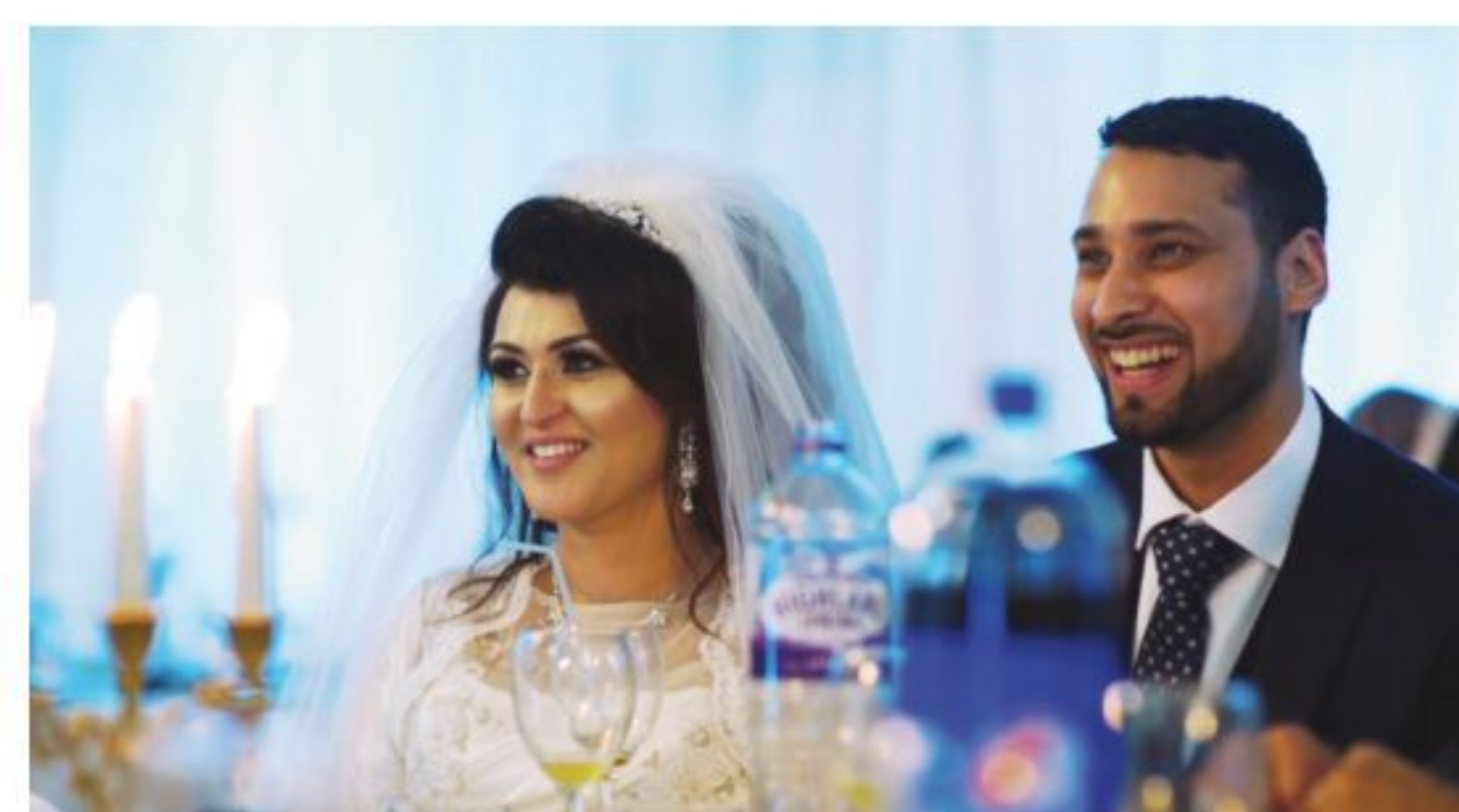
free music for a project
al music for some of our

our workflow
an all spend less time
and videos

Share Playlist



© Andrew Michael



© Ellyn Cook

USE NATURAL LIGHT

Keep it simple when it comes to illumination and harness natural sources where possible

Good videography, like photography, is all about the lighting. That being said, many small-scale videographers prefer to work without complicated setups. "I would say my lighting takes up the least amount of space in my kit store," says filmmaker Matt Buckner, who is part of production company Film Hive (www.filmhive.co.uk). "I try to use natural light as much as possible. That being said, I like to enhance a shot by using a few lights to accent or frame a subject's face." For interviews, Matt will create drama by casting shadows on faces. "I tend to just use LED panel lights as they're lightweight, bright and don't get hot."

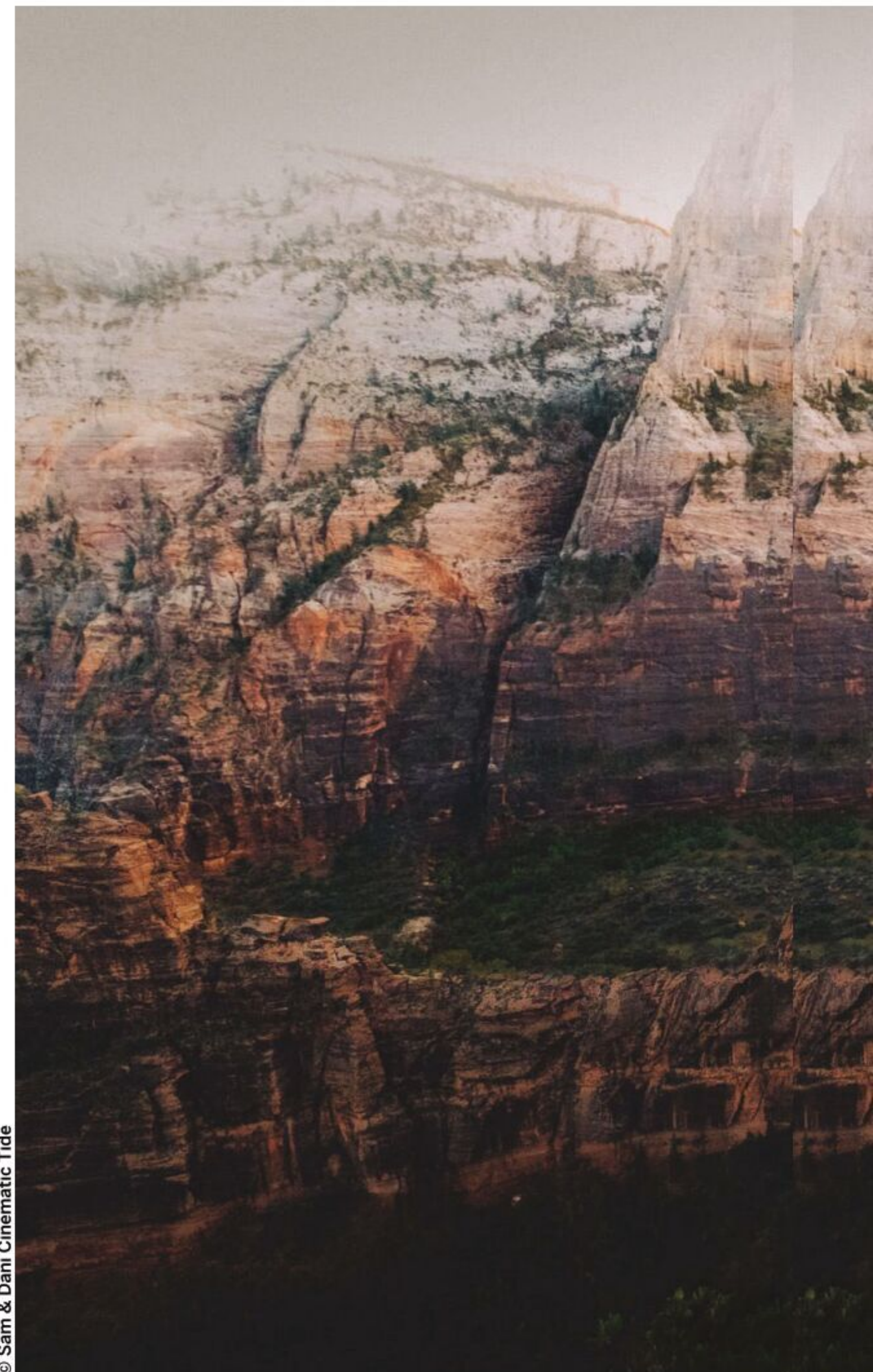
Wedding pro Ellyn Cook favours this option, too: "I have a couple of small battery-powered LED lights and stands, but the only time I'll use them is if there is very little natural light in the bridal prep room, or if the DJ doesn't have any lighting. If that's the case I set it up head-height and film into the light,

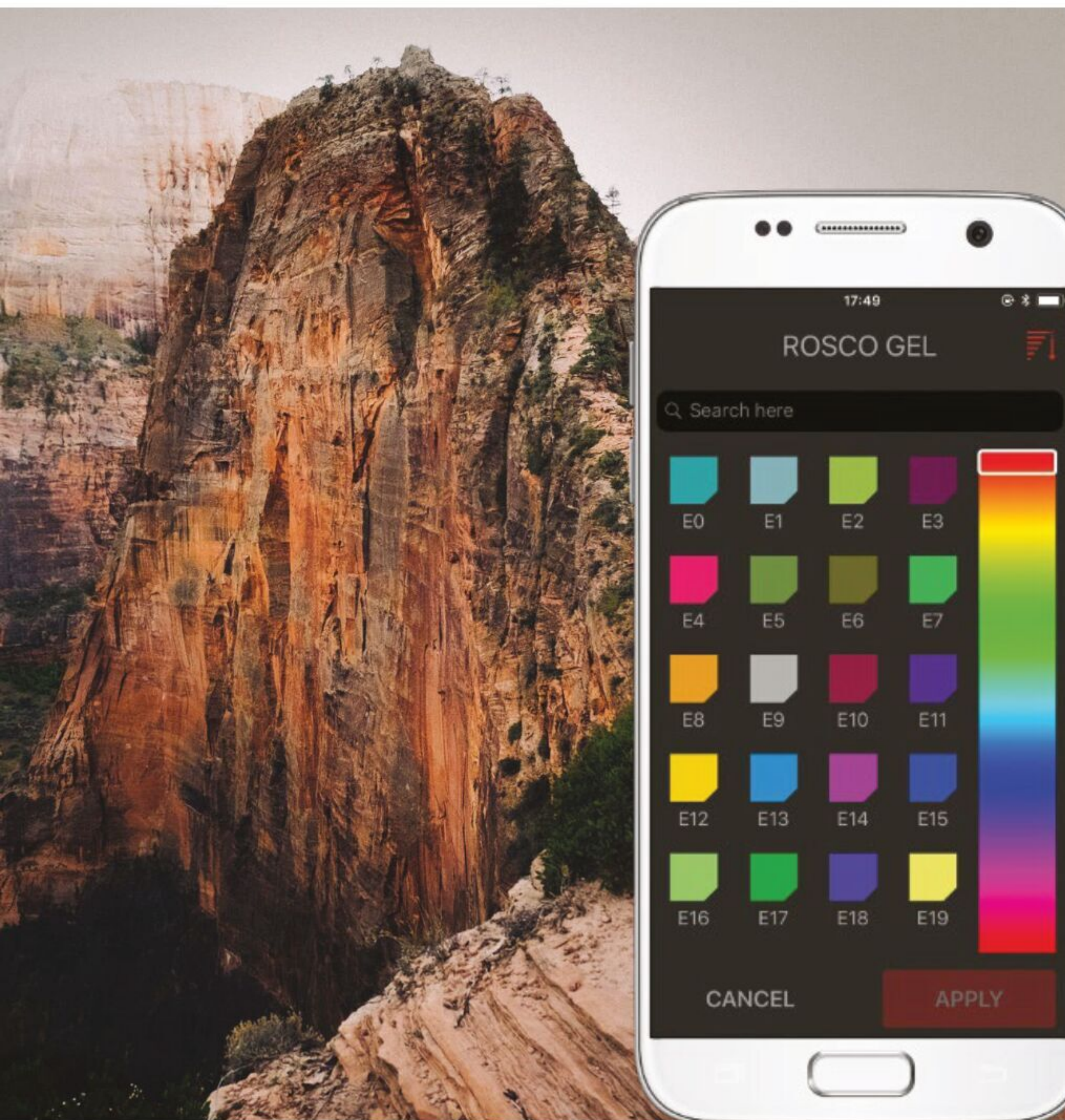
so the people in between the camera and the light have a nice halo effect."

Andrew Michael doesn't like to use lights during the day either, as he wants to capture natural shots without guests knowing he's there. "Preparations are the part of the day where you have the most control. Turn off harsh room lights (all of them if possible) and ask beforehand to have the bride placed in front of windows for make-up so natural light is used at all times. You can get away with video being more underexposed and therefore reflect the atmosphere of the room."

In most low-light situations, you still have a level of control. "You can ask a venue to keep the house lights at a preferred level for the speeches," adds Andrew as an example of being proactive. "Unfortunately, it's not a film set so [lighting] is something you have to adapt to. I use the Sony a7S II as it handles low light extremely well."

© Sam & Dani Cinematic Tide





Lights for video

LEDs come in different powers and sizes, but all are suited for the transitioning stills photographer

Rotolight AEOS LED Light This powerful (5750 lux at 3ft) and portable (1cm thick) light is ideal for location videographers on the move. The battery also lasts for up to three hours.



Manfrotto Lumimuse 8 LED Light A small affordable panel that mounts on the camera's hotshoe. It isn't as bright as other options (550 lux at 1 metre), but will illuminate nearby faces in dim environments well enough.



Vibesta Verata624 Daylight LED Panel Light This light is best suited for studio shooting, thanks to its AC adaptor and larger size. 624 LEDs produce a constant lighting output of 3240 lux.



Aputure LS C300D Light Storm LED Kit One for serious video productions, this outputs 14,200 lux at 50cm. The cooling fan operates at just 18dB, so it shouldn't be heard during recording.



Left Creative limitations

Here, Andrew Michael has underexposed to throw the couple into silhouette and convey the intimate nature of the scene

**Above
Take inspiration** Cinematic Tide use the location (like Angels Landing in Utah, shown here) to inspire them into how they can light the scene

**Above Insert
Clever operation** Specialist light units such as MIX from DMG Lumière (by Rosco) can be used on high-end video sets and controlled from smartphone apps

How to light videos Master a three-light setup for indoor interviews



1 Position your subject Ask your subject to sit down and frame up the shot for your footage first. You'll be positioning three continuous light sources (these could be LEDs).



2 Turn on key light Position the main light, the brightest of the three you are using, behind the camera and facing your subject, above their eye level.



3 Add fill light Position a light to the side of your subject at a 45-degree angle, to fill in shadows on their face. Set the intensity to around half that of the key light.



4 Add back light Position another light behind your subject out of shot, outlining their head and creating separation between them and the background.



5 Check the view Use Live View to check the lighting effect. Tweak the white balance, angle and position of lights, and ratio of power between the three lights.



6 Add accessories To modify the setup before you start rolling the camera, you could add in a reflector or diffuser, or attach coloured gels over the light sources.

CREATE A FINAL EDIT

Decide what footage makes the final cut and produce a video that truly wows

Once you've wrapped up your shoot, there's a lot of footage that needs to be organised into a sensible timeline. Apart from adding the odd exposure adjustment, editing video is generally a very different skill to photo editing and the key is to engage the viewer by telling a story. Although, even in the case of genres such as wedding videos, this doesn't have to mean a linear account of the shoot from beginning to end. Clips should be weaved together in the most engaging way, rather than just the order they occurred.

It's hard to know where to start when it comes to editing. You might drag all of the essential video clips onto the timeline and trim them down. Make a very rough cut of the essential videos and then add in B-roll footage (all the secondary clips that add character and variety). If you've been filming a wedding, think about clips of the cake or the venue, for example.

Ellyn Cook starts by backing up footage and setting up a file structure: "I create an 'all usable' sequence that works out to being more than 90 minutes long, sync the sound and do a multi-cam edit. I usually hear a sound bite I know will start my story." From there, she also

creates a highlights sequence. "I play around with chronology, but it's just about seeing what works with the footage."

As the editing stage also covers audio, be aware of the copyright issues surrounding any music that's recorded in the production (which could include the tunes blasted out at a reception disco). If your video is going to be shared or viewed online, you'll need to licence the tracks that you use. Hit pop songs are expensive, so try checking out online sites that offer royalty-free tracks, such as Premium

"Clips should be weaved together in the most engaging way"

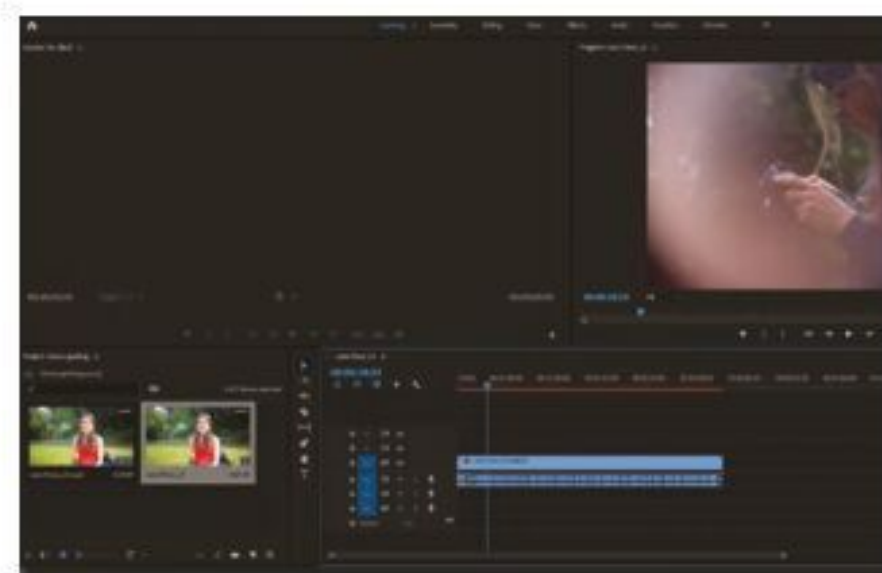
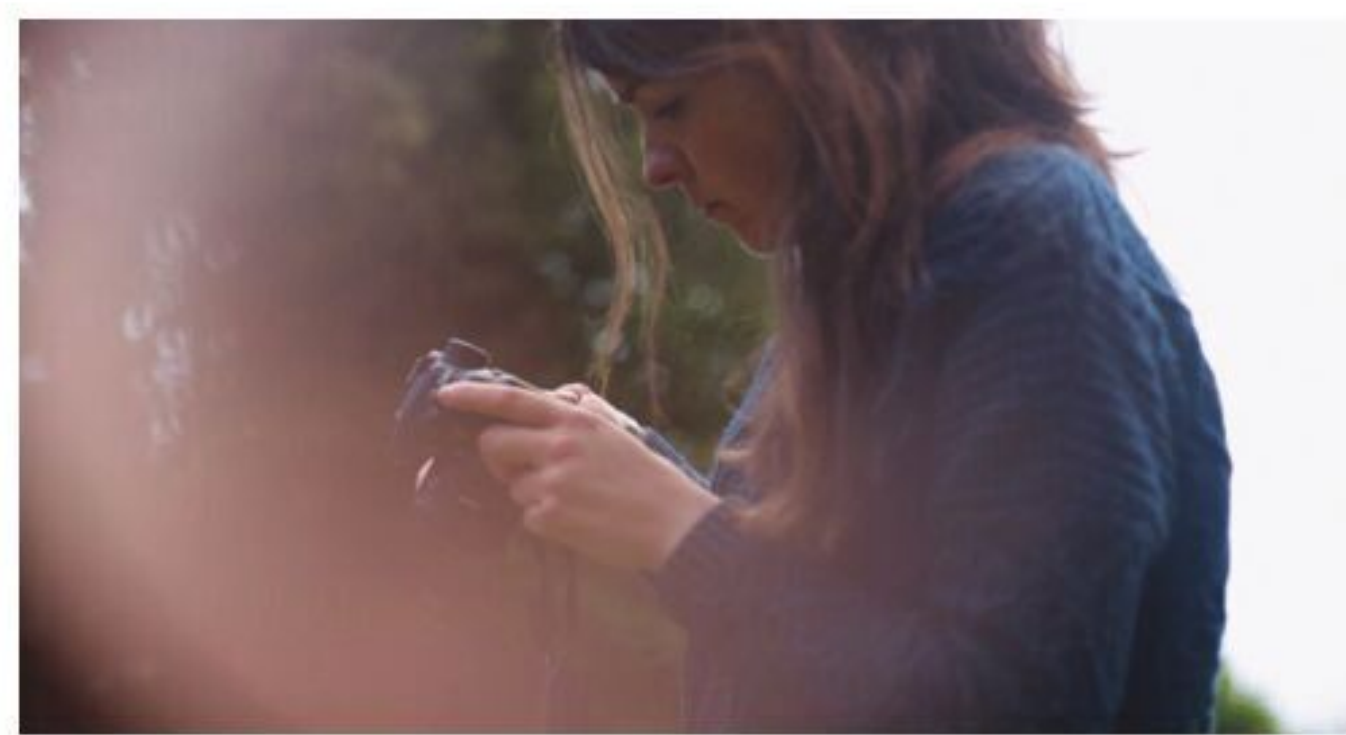
Beat (www.premiumbeat.com). "I use the vocal and instrumental versions in my edits, but sometimes nothing sounds right and you just need to pay for the individual song you like," says Ellyn. "Before buying, I always download a watermarked version and edit to that. If you find out the song doesn't work you've not wasted any money."



© Sam & Dani Cinematic Tide

Use colour grading

Discover ways to edit the style, feel and look of clips in Adobe Premiere Pro CC



1 Open up the software Import all your footage into the workspace. It's easier to colour and correct all your clips at the same time before you start to cut them.



2 Tweak the basics Select your chosen clip. Go to the Color tab at the top and use the Basic Correction section to make technical tweaks to White Balance and Tone.



3 Apply presets In the Creative tab, try out different Looks from the menu. You can change the Vibrance and Tint Balance using the Adjustments sliders.



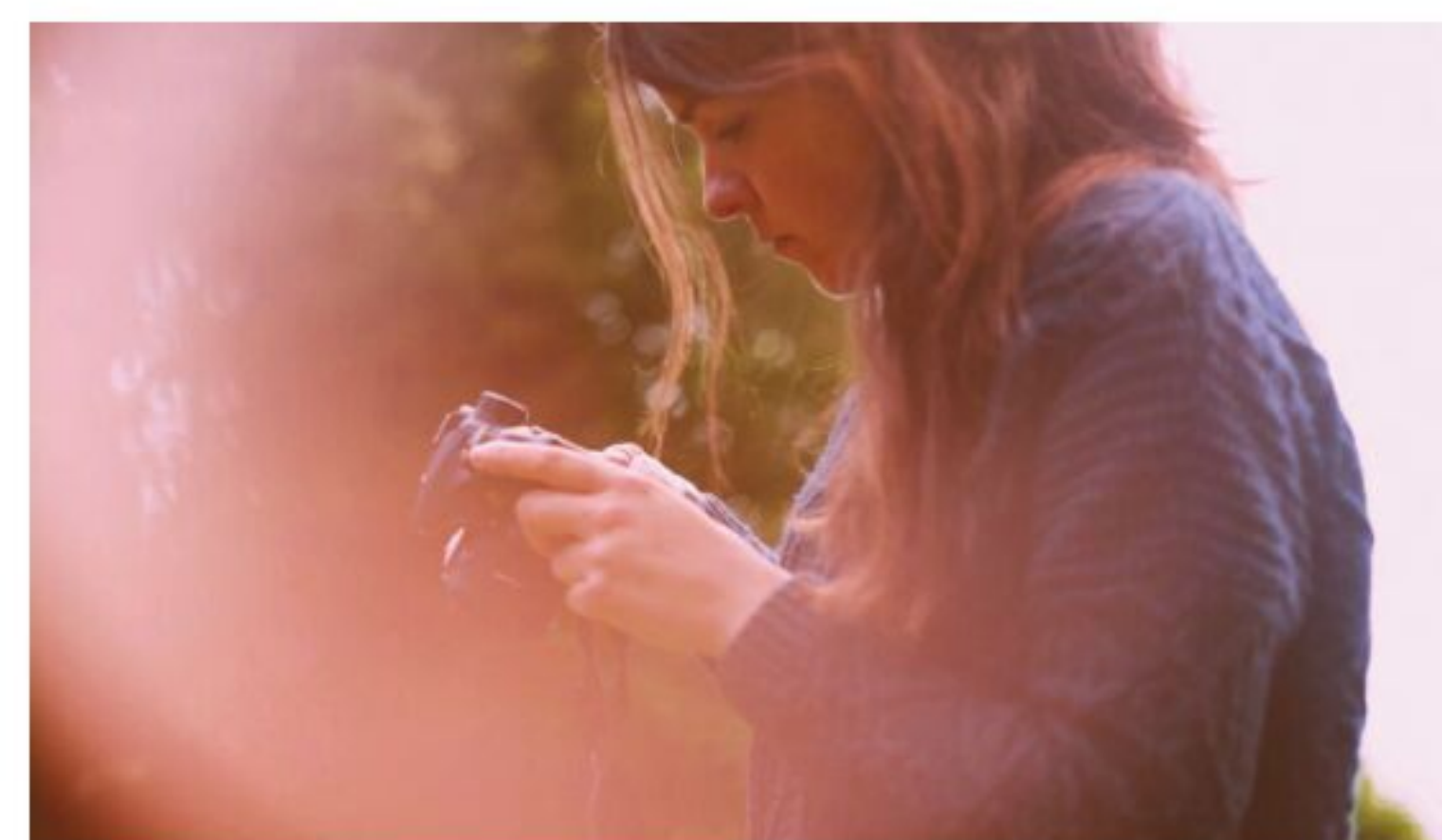
4 Add curves Go to the next Curves section to refine the look you've applied by adding RGB Curves and a Hue Saturation Curve. Keep checking the result as you edit.



5 Consistent colour In Color Match, click Apply Match (with Comparison View and Face Detection activated) to make all shots look like they belong to the same scene.



6 Get advanced Use the HSL Secondary panel to adjust shadows, midtones, and highlights using the colour wheels. Add a vignette as the last step if desired.



Final look

By making simple adjustments to the colour and tone of our clip, we have created a more atmospheric result



© Eilyn Cook



Above

Use client feedback

Ellyn Cook creates two highlight sequences of weddings in case the couple requests any changes

Far left

Specialist cameras

"We use the Sony a7 III and benefit from the IBS (in-body stabilisation) with our lenses," says Cinematic Tide

Left top

Folder your footage

"I rename footage to a unique and relevant file name and organise into folders," says Matt Buckner



Left bottom

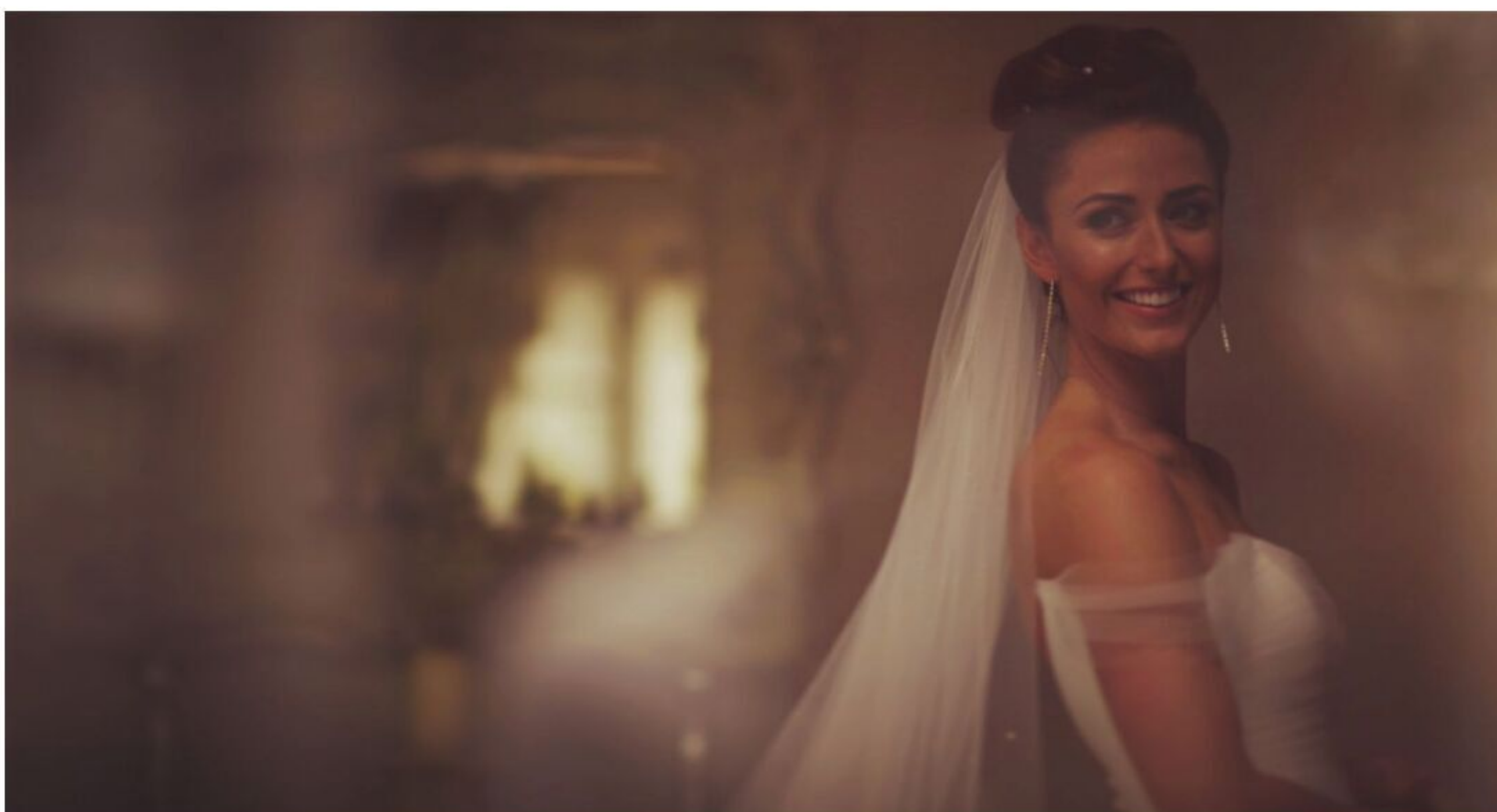
Find the story

The timeline is where all the clips get placed. You might want to add transitions between clips to make footage smoother

Below

Know your scenes

Try to watch every second of the footage you are working with, so you can pick out the best shots



© Eilyn Cook

Top software

The best programs to use for Oscar-worthy video edits



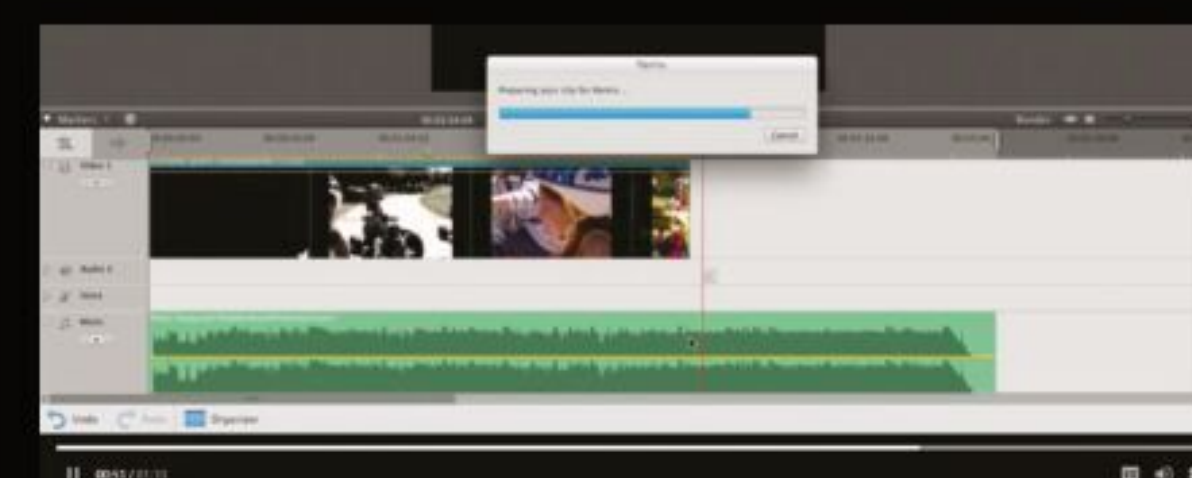
Adobe Premiere Pro CC A pro-level, premium suite that allows unlimited video tracks. The program has plenty of trimming and colour tools, and integrates with Photoshop/Lightroom.



CyberLink PowerDirector Bridging the gap between consumer and pro, the effects and adjustment options make it easy to fix lighting and colour. However, it's available for Windows users only.



Apple iMovie A free choice for Mac users looking to practise basic editing skills. It has a simple interface, with features including colour matching, themes and plenty of audio tools.



Adobe Premiere Elements With a smaller feature list, this is a scaled-down Premiere Pro. There are guided edits and auto-movie generation option.



Filmora With an intuitive design for those new to video editing, footage can be quickly transformed with a variety of filters, graphic overlays and colour tuning. 4K resolution is supported.

MASTER FILE HANDLING ESSENTIALS

Learn the fundamental skills required for an organised database of high-quality images

Photography has always been a two-stage process, with significant amounts of work performed at both the shooting stage and in processing, be it in a darkroom or at a computer. However, this division has never been more equal than in the digital age – the vast degree of processing and archiving possibilities make post-shooting work occupy 50 per cent or more of the complete imaging workflow. Therefore, the success of this stage can be a make-or-break factor in the quality and integrity of our final images. Handling of digital files is a vital consideration, not just in the organisation and archiving within an image database, but also in maintaining the quality and longevity of the files themselves.

A common misconception is that image quality is defined solely at the shooting stage, but misuse of file transfer and duplication methods can result in degradation and limit future use. Good file treatment is essential to ensure maximum quality of the end product, guaranteeing that all users, viewers and clients receive equal versions. With regards to organisation, it is useful to have a proven system of storing and backup that works for you, enabling you to construct an ordered database from which images can be easily searched for and retrieved. Scheduling backups and categorising both your original and edited images gives you peace of mind that you will be able to find a shot for any possible function.

MASTER FILE HANDLING ESSENTIALS

From shoot to print

By correctly taking, processing and cataloguing images you can be sure that the final print matches your expectations in the field and for your client's needs, even years in the future

All untagged images
© Vit Kovalcik

UNDERSTAND IN-CAMERA PROCESSING

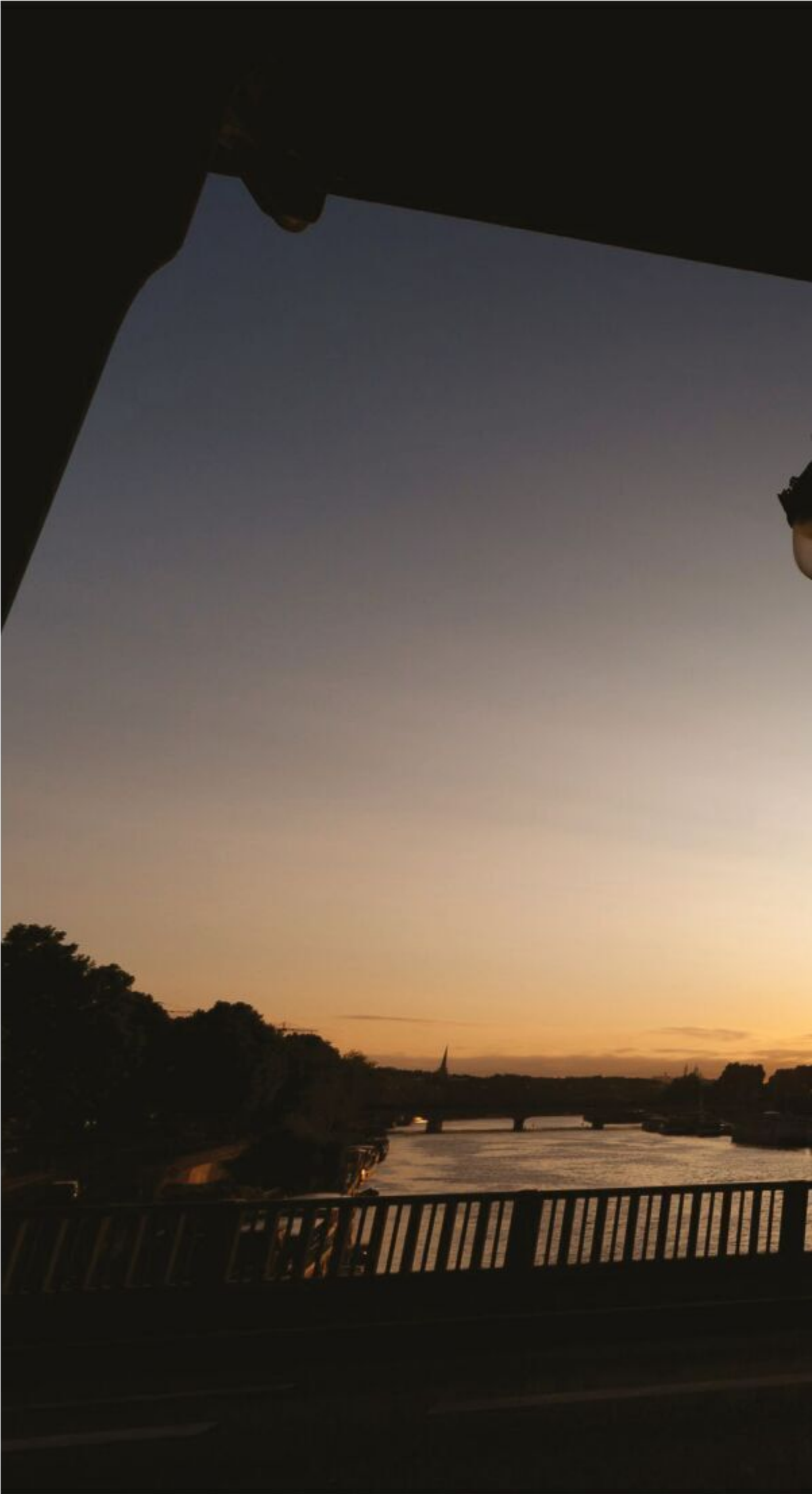
Perfect camera-based file-handling skills by learning how your images are treated

The first stage of file handling will of course occur in-camera. The process begins with file format choice, which will determine how your images will need to be treated later. This is an important decision, since compatibility is an ever-shifting variable in the digital world. It is possible that a format in common use today will be largely obsolete in ten years' time. This is especially the case with RAW formats, which are only supported by third-party editing applications for a limited period. It is often suggested that RAW is the best format in which to shoot, due to the extended processing possibilities. The file sizes of these images should not be overlooked however – RAW files are considerably larger and take up more memory card and hard drive space than JPEGs. This may impact your archiving and back-up schedule, as file moving takes far longer and additional 'sidecar' files, containing processing data, must also be monitored. Conversely, JPEGs offer advantages in space saving and transfer times, yet provide little scope for making major tonal and colour changes. Whichever format

Shoot both

These days, there's every reason to shoot both JPEG and RAW files at the same time, as memory cards with large capacities are now more affordable and ubiquitous. This enables you to decide at a later date whether you want to keep all the RAW files.

you choose to work with, it is necessary to be aware that camera work is not the same for all file types. With RAWs, it is essential that you fully commit to the appropriate work process; since exposure is less fixed than when shooting compressed files, it is better to calculate settings that generate the ideal distribution of tonal information i.e. 'shooting to the right'. With JPEG shooting, always aim to capture correct colour and brightness at the moment of exposure, to reduce the need for file-damaging software edits. This can be done by taking custom white balance readings or using a preset and bracketing exposure, to capture a full tonal range across multiple files where necessary. You should also adjust other parameters, such as sharpening and contrast, based on the current scene. When deciding which format to use, assess which characteristics are most desirable at the time. RAW can be your standard option for scenes with difficult tonal range control, while JPEGs are the best option when space is limited and the end use of the image is known.



RAW compression

Why would you want to compress your RAW files? Learn the main advantages

While it's common knowledge that JPEGs are 'lossy' files (some valuable data is removed), RAW compression is a less-familiar concept. RAW files are often compressed slightly by default, to reduce the space they occupy on a memory card. There are several options for compression levels available on many cameras, each with variable usefulness. Uncompressed RAWs are impractically large, while the Compressed option can strip too much data. Ensure your camera is set to Lossless Compression, which will package data for later decompression in software – the best balance between size and versatility.





Left
Tonal advantage

In scenes with tones extending to the extremes of the camera's dynamic range, 14-bit files offer more in terms of detail recovery

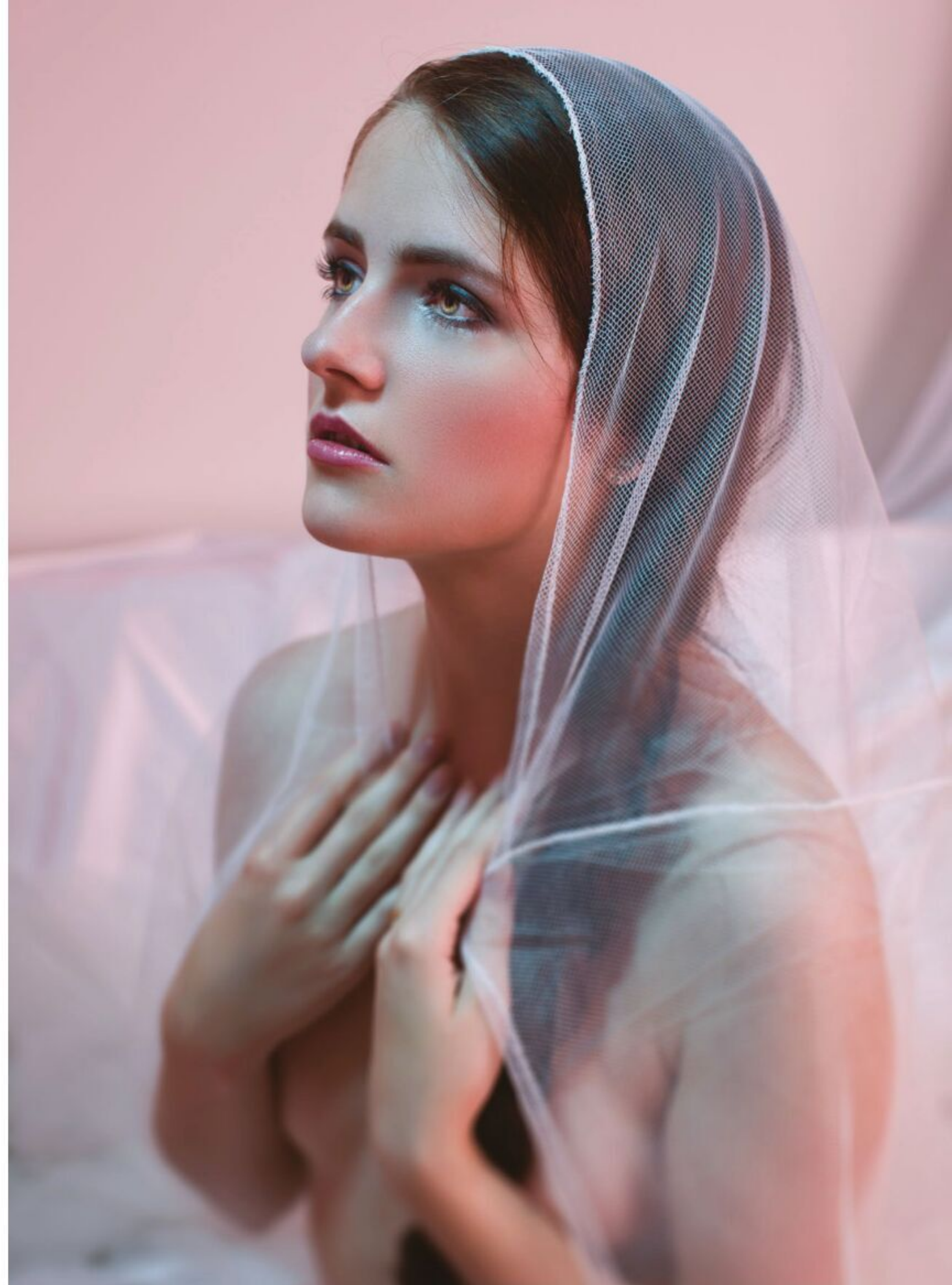
Right
Controlled studio lighting

Under constant lighting conditions, where you have full tonal control, it is possible to shoot in 12-bit mode for a quicker workflow

Below
Quality JPEGs

When JPEG file size is desirable, get your exposure and colour perfect in-camera. Adjust contrast, white balance and sharpness for print-ready results

© Peter Fenech



Learn bit-depth essentials

Beyond RAW compression, you should also consider tone capture per pixel

It is also possible to select how many tones are stored in each colour channel in your RAW files, on a per-pixel basis. The default setting is usually 12-bit, which will output smaller files but will place less data in highlights and shadows. 14-bit RAWs contain 4x the information, making it easier to recover tones in the brightest and darkest areas of an image. The files are significantly bigger, but unless you are working in a controlled lighting environment, 14-bit is the best choice. Switch bit depth from the camera menu.



USE THE CORRECT ARCHIVING PROCEDURES

There is more to transferring and cataloguing images than you might imagine – learn how to avoid the common potential pitfalls

Creating an ordered image library is of utmost importance for a professional photographer, where the rate of image production is likely in region of several hundred per week. Learning to correctly and efficiently separate usable files from rejected ones for easy and rapid retrieval is where many people fail. There is little more frustrating than being unable to find an image that you know will suit a specific function or client, several years after it was originally created. Using archiving software such as Adobe Lightroom is a first step to solving this issue, but learning to use it effectively is a further challenge. When starting out with a new collection of images, be it your first Lightroom Catalog or a series in a new genre or with new equipment, it is a good idea to define an organising schedule at this early stage. This will help avoid the

common problems faced by inexperienced users. A frequent example is where Lightroom loses track of the source RAW files on the hard drive. This can be caused by moving these files between subfolders, or keeping them on an external drive that is subsequently removed from the system. A possible solution is to store all your images in a single folder, which may seem counterintuitive, but will simplify the linking process for Lightroom. Secondly, unless a good tagging strategy is devised, searches within Lightroom can be ineffective. The same is true of rating images – unless you

have a well-established system, using a mix of flags, stars and labels can be confusing in the long-term. It is better to use only one of these methods, to streamline the screening process. Before even transferring files to a computer, there is room for error in the photographer's treatment of them. A very widespread mistake is to fill a memory card until the camera registers it as full. This can result in corruption of some or all of the other files on the cards, as the image counter is based on average file sizes, so sometimes there is insufficient capacity to support an image.

“A mistake is to fill a memory card until the camera registers it as full, as the image counter is based on average file sizes”

Streamline your cataloguing workflow

Sidestep archiving difficulties by working out the easiest and most efficient process for you



1 Use fast card readers If you have invested in high-speed memory cards, choose

a quality card reader to get the most benefit from the fast read speeds. These will be more efficient than transferring directly from the camera, with faster file movement and image render previews.



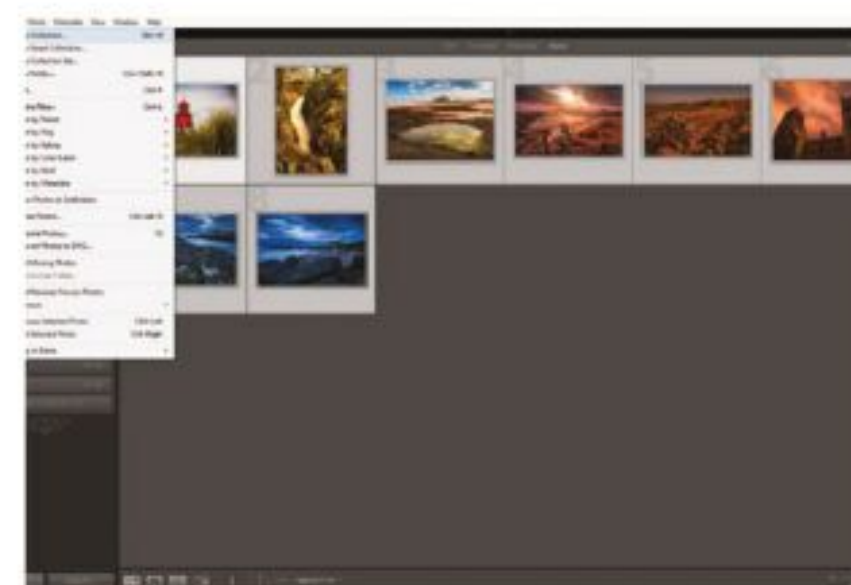
2 Prevent any duplicates When copying images from a card, select the option in

Lightroom to exclude suspected duplicate files from the transfer. This will avoid cluttering the Catalog with multiple versions of images, which can result in confusion when reviewing shoots in the future.



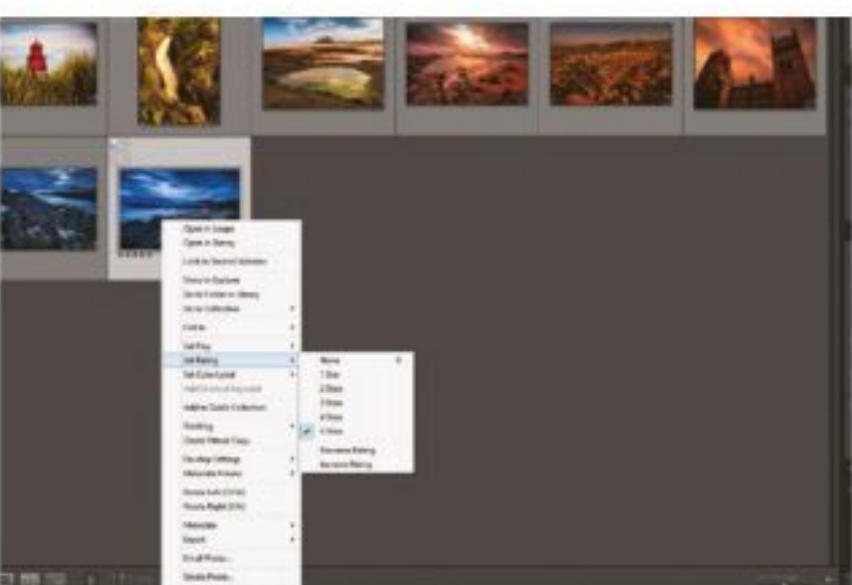
3 Copy to two drives Assign two drives to receive a copy of the files from

the memory card on import. Choose a main destination folder for your import and then select 'Make a Second Copy To' from the File Handling tab in Lightroom – an excellent time-saving step.



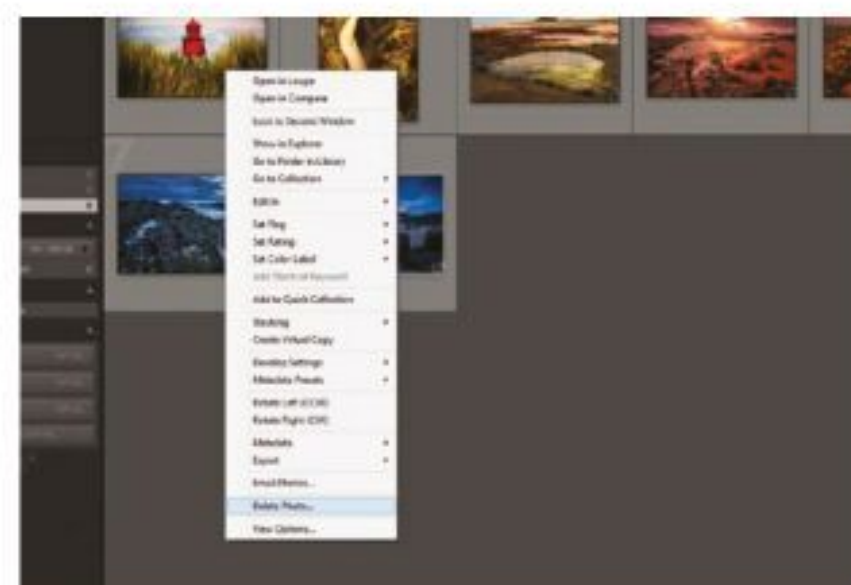
4 Create LR Collections Instead of creating multiple Catalogs or using a

complex folder structure on your hard drive, sub-categorise files within a Catalog, using Collections. This will enable you to quickly isolate related images in the future, while also minimising the chance of broken links to source files.



5 Review and rate Once the images from your shoot have been imported and arranged

within your Lightroom Catalog, it's now time to assess each for sharpness, exposure and composition. Apply simple star ratings or flag stand-out images for further examination. Add file-specific tags at this stage if required.



6 Delete rejected files As you review, delete obviously substandard images

immediately, to remove them from the Catalog. You can choose to delete the source files from the drive or simply to delete the preview from Lightroom. For images that may be useful elsewhere, choose to remove from the Collection only.

Avoid common cataloguing mistakes

Be aware of these key errors and quickly identify where challenges may arise in future

In a photographer's tight schedule, the last thing we want is to be unable to find images, or realise we have lost hours of editing work. Practising a logical workflow will help to prevent these issues.

Mistake: Forgetting to appropriately tag all files from a shoot, so some are missed in searches.

Answer: Add tags to all images from any given shoot on import. Use Lightroom to apply specific tags to every image simultaneously.

Mistake: Image tags are too general so searches are less effective.

Answer: Perform test searches periodically to find the most common and usable tags for your regular work. Add these as standard, then apply secondary, shoot-specific tags.

Mistake: Splitting files between folders so that Lightroom Catalog links are broken.

Answer: If using Lightroom, keep all relevant files together on your hard drive, in the same folder. This will help LR keep track of all source files.

Mistake: Relinking a Lightroom preview image to the incorrect source RAW file.

Answer: Save your processing settings as a preset, so that edits can be quickly removed and reapplied to the correct image.

Mistake: Failing to back up the Lightroom Catalog, placing image edits at risk.

Answer: Remember to create regular backups, so that all processing information is duplicated and safe, in the event of hard disk damage.

Mistake: Backing up the Catalog to the same, default destination, so no redundancy exists.

Answer: Change the Catalog backup destination to an external drive in the LR Preferences dialogue. This will create a true, remote backup, along with your RAW files.

Mistake: Exporting sensitive image metadata and distributing this to clients and unknown third parties.

Answer: By default, all camera data (including serial number) is embedded in your images. You can remove this by copying the image to a blank Photoshop document or by using specialised software.

Mistake: Using multiple Catalogs.

Answer: While new Lightroom Catalogs can be created to group files, this adds complexity to your archiving strategy. Unless you are highly experienced with LR, use Collections instead.



© Peter Fenech



Above top Geotag your files

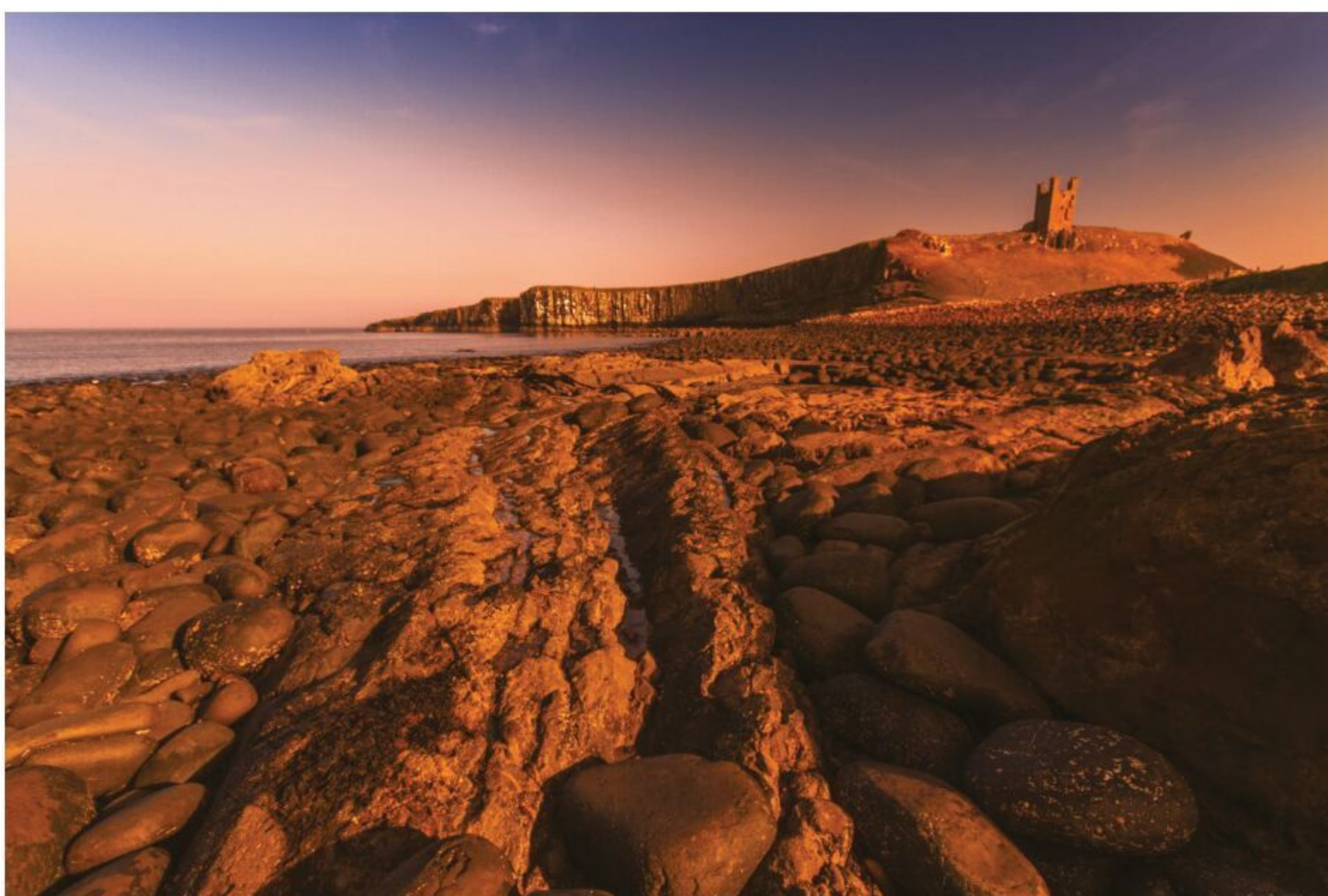
Use an external or in-camera GPS device to embed location data into your images. This will enable searches based on place and time

Above The importance of tags

Adding tags not only makes file searching easier, but a well-tagged file will have greater appeal for a potential client

Below Big-screen quality

Wait until you have checked quality on a large computer monitor before choosing to delete files. The camera LCD can obscure potential

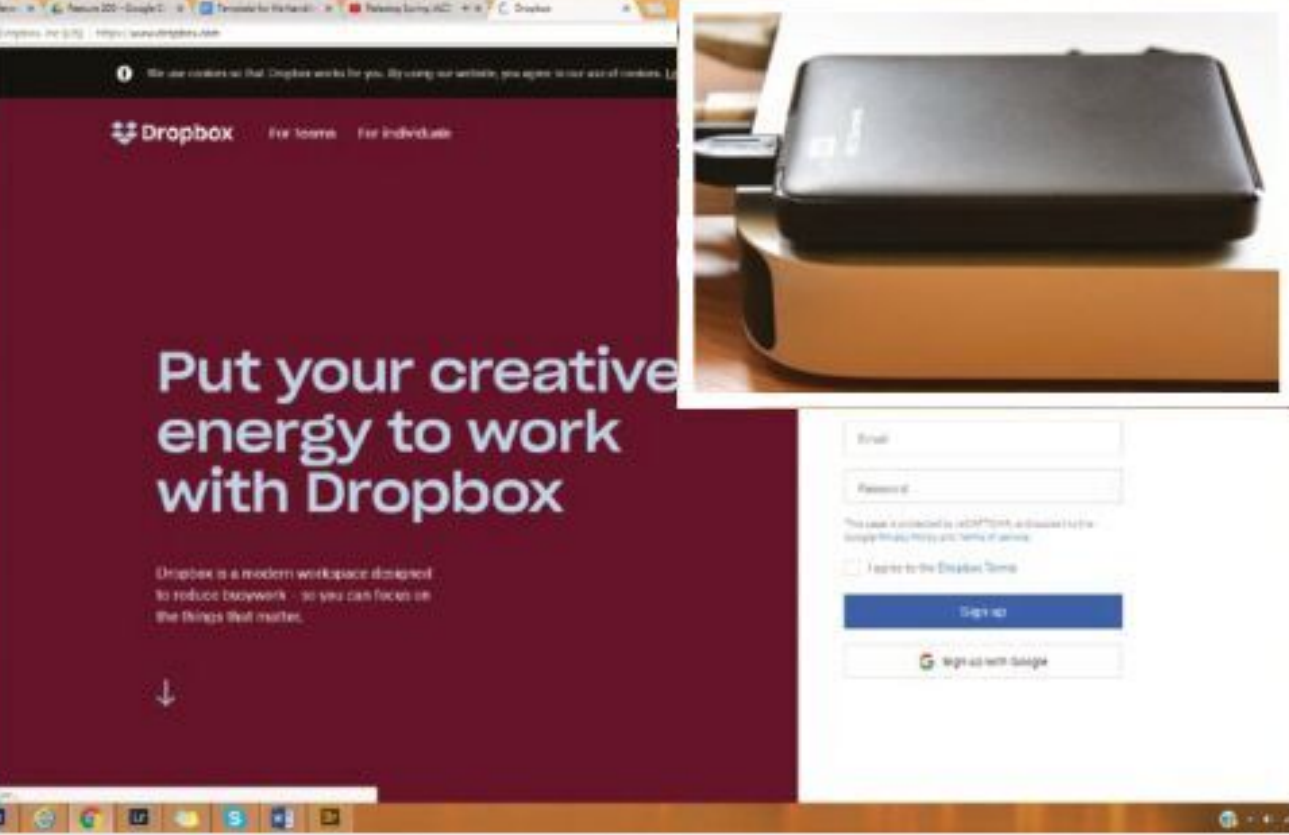


© Peter Fenech

Choose your storage option

Images can be stored on physical drives or online. Each option has its pros and cons

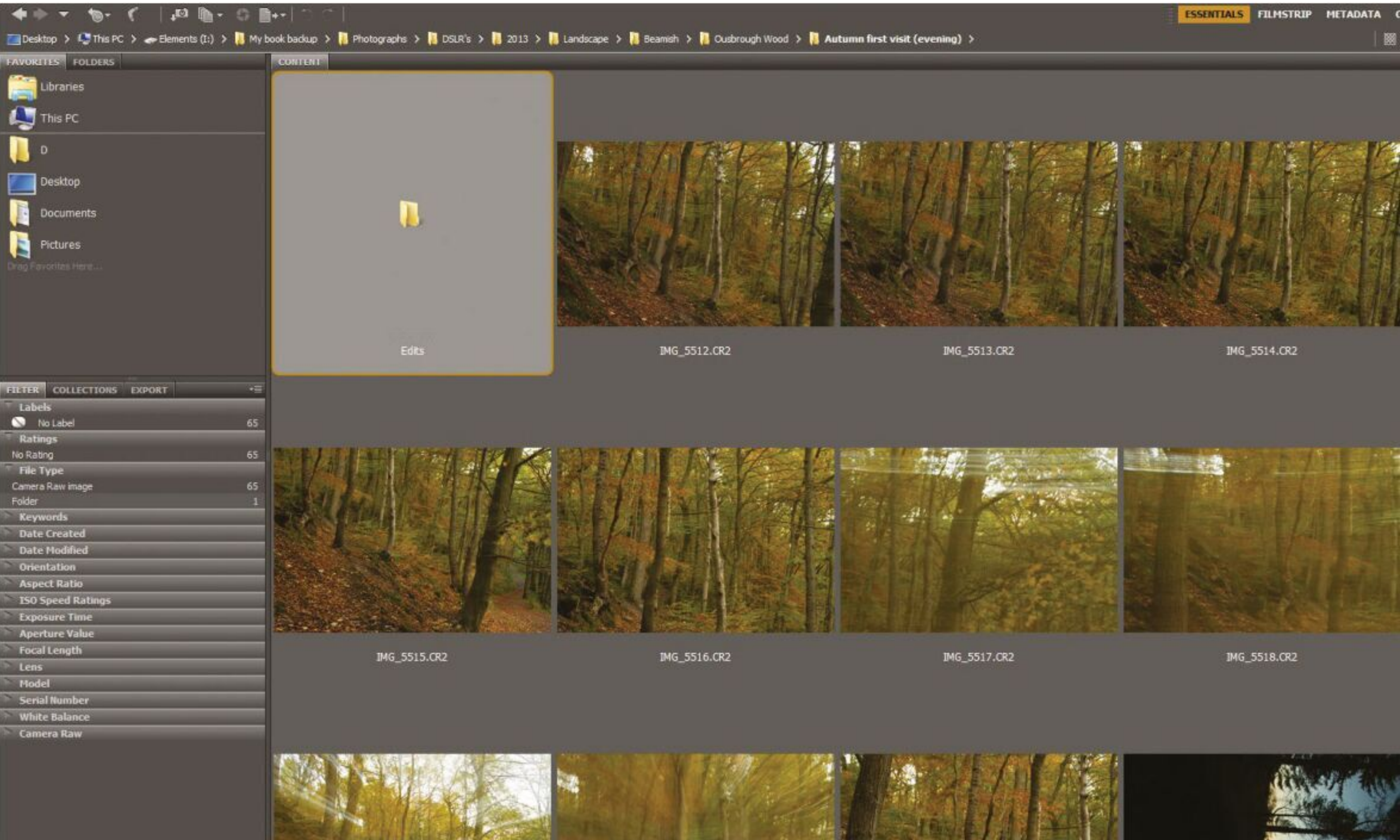
While local storage (on the hard drive of the computer used for editing) allows instant access to files for review and processing, it is a standard practice to back up to at least one other external hard drive. This ensures there is a duplicate of all files in the event of a disk failure. However, cloud storage is an easy way to add an off-site collection of duplicate photos to your back-up structure. Even if there are three separate local backups, all can be lost due to fire, flooding or theft. Online storage can slow the process of cataloguing however and it also relies on a stable Wi-Fi connection to be usable, which can be problematic while travelling. Cloud backups should be seen as an additional line of defence against file loss, but should not be used as an 'active' database from which images are sourced for editing and output.



Above
Choose your file format
You can never be certain how your files will be used in the future. Choose TIFF format for lossless archiving, especially for shots containing delicate tones

Right
Pair edits and originals
Create a folder structure that makes searching for processed images simple. Store these in the same folder as your RAW files, so they are sequential in your Catalog

Far right
Create virtual copies
If you want to avoid generating multiple TIFF files, create virtual copies in Lightroom, so you can apply varied editing. These will all be saved within your Catalog



PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Learn the correct process for safe storage, backup and long-term archiving of files

The age of digital technology has brought with it great advantages in the ease and efficiency of which we can store and retrieve our work. Whereas, during the days of film, large amounts of physical space was required to safely store negatives and prints, now digital images can be kept in their thousands within electronic repositories. For working professional photographers, this also provides significant time-saving benefits, allowing files to be rapidly found, adjusted and distributed to clients. However, there are also reciprocal challenges to tackle, namely the need for a water-tight back-up strategy to avoid potentially massive irretrievable data losses. There are also issues relating to the continuous evolution of technology and the consequences this has for file longevity. As new cameras are released, these introduce unique RAW file formats, for which processing software must be constantly updated. To avoid exponentially growing programming difficulties, software manufacturers must periodically remove support for older formats, meaning photographers must take measures to ensure they future-proof their images.

Don't discard

It might be tempting to delete a RAW file once you have processed and outputted it to a JPEG, TIFF or PSD file, but retaining the RAW original enables you to revisit your images at a later date to produce different – and perhaps superior – edits.

Furthermore, new operating systems result in outdated software support, and ongoing camera updates can make some memory card types obsolete. There are several options that enable us to safeguard our images in the long term. Storage can be done on both physical drives and online, both of which have their own benefits and costs. It is a good practice to use both, to ensure there's a compromise between speed of accessibility and adequate safety, so that there is always a redundant backup of every file in case of drive failure or damage. With regards to a back-up protocol, it is highly advisable that images are copied from the memory card onto a more robust device, immediately after a shoot.

Similarly, edited images should be duplicated to a second location soon after their creation. It is a useful idea to create a folder or Lightroom Collection specifically for multiple, differentially processed versions of your images, which will also be present in two locations. To combat outdated files and software, a popular solution is to convert RAW images to a universal format, such as DNG, and to save any edited images as PSDs with layers fully intact.



PRO PHOTO SECRETS

10 professional photographers take us behind the scenes to reveal their key approach to their work

There's nothing quite like the chance to look behind the scenes and discover how a photographer actually works. Tips and advice in context are of far more value when it comes to learning new techniques and skills. Over the course of the

following 20 pages, you'll see exactly how 10 incredible professional photographers, who work in a diverse range of genres, produce their incredible work. From landscapes to portraits, and from liquids to squirrels, you'll learn the secrets of the professionals.



TECHNIQUES

MARK BAUER

The landscape shooter gives us an insight into his way of working

My approach to landscape photography is fairly simple. I like traditional, or 'classic' landscape images, which exhibit simplicity, balance and harmony in the composition, shot in light which flatters the subject. I like to create a strong feeling of perspective and am drawn to 'structured' images that often feature architectural elements in them.

I've learned to be fairly disciplined and I've tried to carry that discipline through to my photography today, taking a considered approach and trying not to rush things. Therefore, like most landscape photographers, all of my images are shot with my camera mounted on a tripod and I have a preference for using a geared head, as this allows for very fine adjustments to the framing of a scene. I also prefer to deal with excessive contrast by using filtration rather than exposure blending, as this reduces time in post-production and also avoids any problem of the light changing between shots.

It's also really important to get to know a location well. It's very rarely that I visit a location for the first time and come away with shots that I'm truly happy with. Getting good shots of a location usually involves multiple visits over a period of weeks, months or even years. Although a lot of research can be done online, there's really no substitute for getting to know an area properly; the more time you spend somewhere, the more you come to understand it – how the light falls at different times of year and how different light, weather conditions and the changing seasons affect the mood of the place.

Keep it simple

The best compositions are often the simplest, so exclude any extraneous elements. Composition is a subtractive process, where you start with what's in front of you and then selectively remove elements by choice of lens, framing and viewpoint.

Arrive early and stay late

The best light often starts much earlier than you think and good light can linger well after sunset. There's nothing worse than missing the best light because you arrived late or packed up too early.

PRO BIO

Mark Bauer has been a full-time professional photographer since 2003 and is considered to be one of the UK's leading landscape photographers, supplying images to stock agencies, corporate clients and magazines. He has won numerous awards in major photographic competitions. Well-known for his articles and books on photographic technique, he is also an experienced workshop leader and tutor.



www.markbauerphotography.com

Above Orientation

Many professional photographers advise shooting both regular landscape and portrait orientation images in the field

Right Perfect the shot

Landscape photographers used a diverse range of filters, but they now rely more on Lightroom to tweak colour





Invest in a good tripod head

Most photographers understand the importance of a sturdy tripod head, but what you put on top of it is just as important. Ball heads are light and easy to operate, but geared heads provide very fine control.

KIT BAG

ADAPTED
MAMIYA 645
105-210MM

ADAPTED
MAMIYA
645
55-110MM

FUJI
32-64MM
F4

FUJI 23MM F4

FUJIFILM
GFX 50S

ARCA-SWISS D4
GEARED HEAD

F-STOP
RUCKSACK

ROLLEI ROCK SOLID
BETA TRIPOD

Left Careful composition

The art of landscape photography lies in the ability to perfectly frame the scene and create a balanced composition that engages the viewer

Below The final image

When everything comes together in the field and the correct editing and processing work has been applied, the final results can be stunning

Pay attention to the sky

What's above the landscape is just as important as the landscape itself, as it helps to define the mood of the image. It should play a big role in your composition choice.

Get to know locations as intimately as possible

The better you know a place, the better your shots of it will be; you will have a better understanding of what light, weather conditions and so on best suit it.

TECHNIQUES

Personal projects

Develop personal work on something you are passionate about. It will enable you to express yourself without constraints. Personal projects can be frustrating and hard, but ultimately they are way more satisfactory than commissions.

Shoot with film

This will make you a better photographer. Film slows you down and you really have to think about what you are doing because you have a limited amount of frames... and budget!

Be prepared

Make sure you take plenty of time when packing your bag before you head off, as being fully prepared will help you to remain focused and in the right state of mind for the shoot ahead.

Left Careful captures

Working at a considered pace is an important part of Cardana's approach

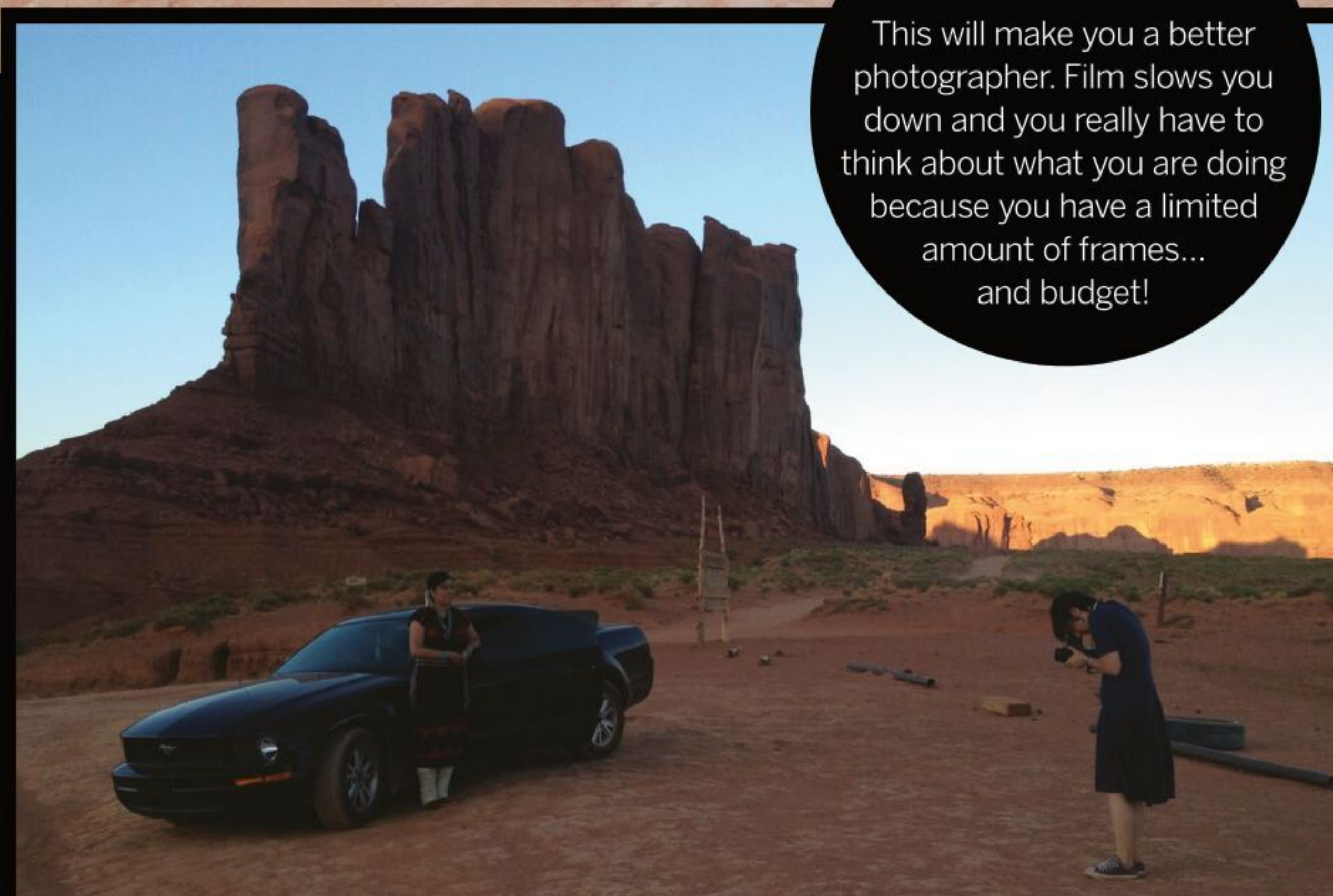
Above All elements

Everything within the frame must work together perfectly to help tell the story

PRO BIO

Carlotta Cardana is an Italian photographer based in London. She mainly shoots portraits, travel and interior features for publications such as *The New York Times*, *T Magazine*, *Marie Claire*, *L'Obs* and several in-flight magazines. Alongside her commissioned work, she develops personal projects, most notably *The Red Road Project* and *Modern Couples*, which have been awarded and exhibited internationally in festivals and galleries.

carlottacardana.com



CARLOTTA CARDANA

How to shoot quality documentary and portrait photography

I started photographing when I was a teenager, as a way of recording fun times with friends. I never considered it as a profession until after I graduated from university and realised that I wasn't much interested in finding a job in my field of studies. I attended a professional course in Milan and then moved to Argentina where I started developing personal projects. From there I moved to Mexico City where I began freelancing as an editorial photographer and worked there for three years. In 2011 I decided to move back to Europe and I picked London because of its photography scene and its cultural offer. I currently divide my time between editorial commissions and personal projects. Even though my work is quite varied, I consider myself a portrait photographer. When I take somebody's portrait, I strive to create an image that is

"I strive to create an image that is truthful to the subject"

truthful to the subject. I like to talk to my subject as much as possible before the sitting, but if a magazine commissions the portrait, I do a lot of research beforehand. I want my sitters to feel represented in my portraits and most of the time I ask them to suggest one or two places that are relevant to their personal story. I like to keep my lighting as natural looking as possible: ideally, I would only use ambient light, but I always carry my battery-powered flashes on shoots. All of my personal work is shot on medium-format film – I like how film slows you down. I also really like the square format, the look and the craft involved in shooting film. I have been using Labyrinth Photographic for years and I don't think my work would be the same without them. I love working in the darkroom with a master printer and, counter-intuitively, my digital files are scans of master prints rather than negative scans. However, I've been shooting most of my latest commissioned work digitally, as editorial budgets don't really allow you to have many expenses.

Don't be afraid to experiment

Take yourself out of your comfort zone and experiment: making mistakes is the best way to learn anything. Wise people are those who have made plenty of errors and photography is filled with happy accidents!



Networking

Build a network of people you trust and admire: photography is a very lonely business. Get feedback on your work and listen to others' opinions but only use your guts and reasoning to make the final decision.

Above Many images

Documentary and editorial photographers need to consider how their photos work together as an overall story



EWEN BELL

Discover how travel photographer Ewen gets his inspiration

My greatest joy in photography is not knowing exactly what is around the next corner. That element of uncertainty and surprise is what I love the most. If you knew exactly what you will photograph each and every day, it wouldn't be much fun at all. Serendipity is a true gift.

Mostly I follow the light, allowing myself to be guided by what it gives me rather than trying to tame it or control it. I wait for where the light first makes its presence across a landscape, where the light pokes through into a dark room, or where the light bounces off a temple wall to illuminate dancing monks. The best days are when the light shows me something I could not have otherwise imagined.

Shooting into the light is part of my style. I love the casual feeling you get from the imperfections when shooting into the light, from the lens flare to details lost in the haze. Composition is not about presenting all the details, but holding back everything except that which is important. Less detail creates more composition. Shooting into the light on a hazy morning is a great example, revealing only pieces of a landscape. I want to use the light to express the character of a place.

Travel photography demands a wide range of skills: landscapes, portraits, action and emotion. Sometimes you even need to be a wildlife photographer, if that's part of the travel experience on offer. The most important skill for travel is to sit back and allow yourself to experience a place before you photograph it. The more you know about your subject, the more likely your photography will express something of value about it.

For most shoots I pack just a 24mm and 50mm lens for my DSLR. For the last few months I've been trying a new camera system from Lumix which is geared towards wildlife and sports photography, and turns out to be very useful with dancing monks as they spin and leap during spiritual chams. I did carry a tripod for special sunrise shoots in Bhutan, as the Lumix G9 also has an 80MP pixel-shift mode which is great for landscape work if you have just a little patience to lock down the camera.

Go slow

The more you rush the less you achieve. Having time to embrace a location, to spend time with people before you photograph them, or to exercise the luxury of returning in better light, is a powerful way to improve your photography. A handful of great shots are more rewarding than a bucket of rubbish ones.

Make use of lens flare

Every lens has its own character. The wider your aperture the softer your flare will be, and the softer your sun lines become too. I find f2 is a sweet spot for pleasing balance of shallow depth field and soft flare.

Above **Landscapes**

Travel photography demands more than just portraits of local people and customs – seek out landscape opportunities, too

Right **Put in the effort**

Travel photographers need to be willing to climb to the highest peaks and scout a diverse range of locations for photos



KIT BAG

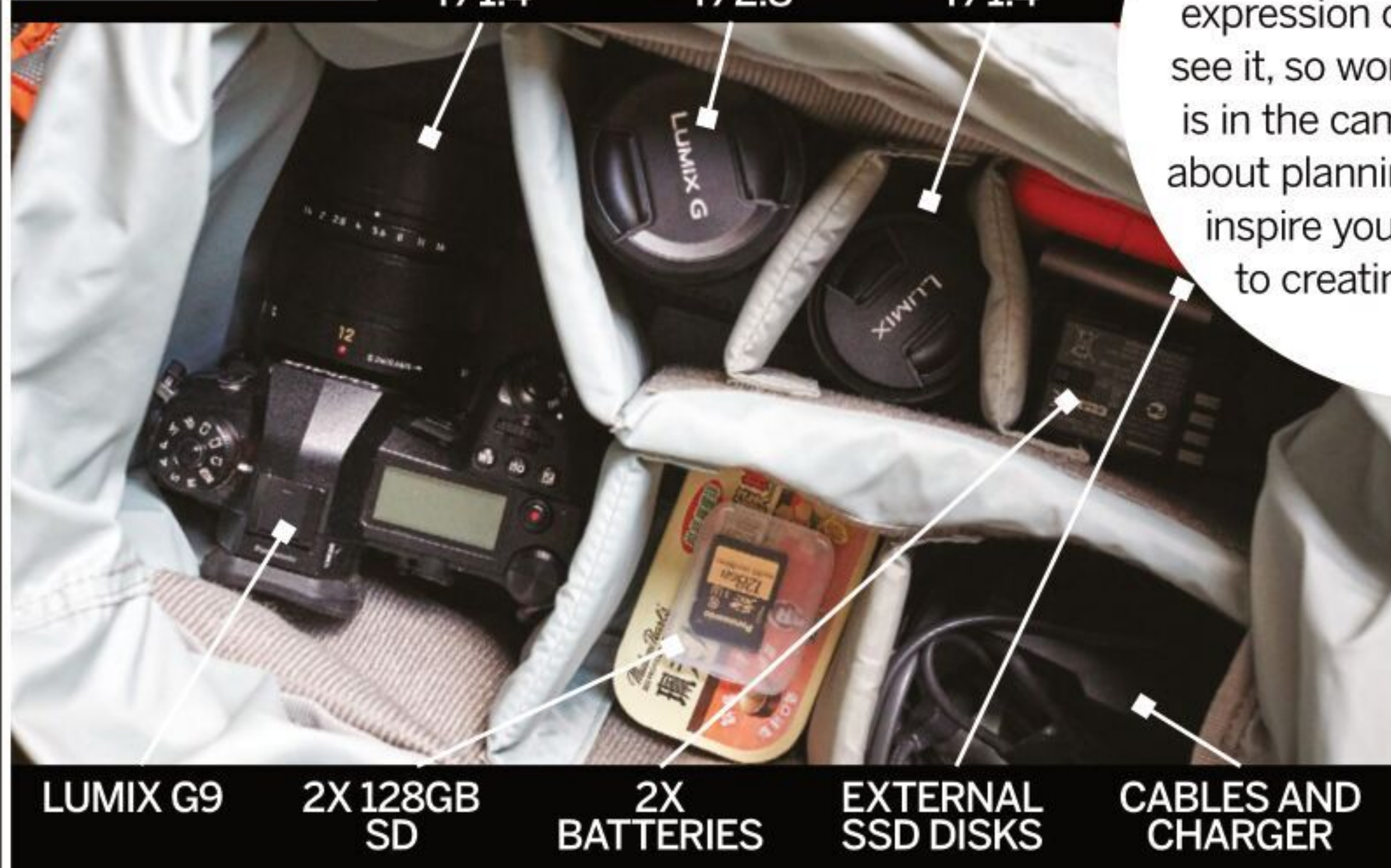
12MM
F/1.4

35-100MM
F/2.8

25MM
F/1.4

All about the experience

Your photography is an expression of the world as you see it, so worry less about what is in the camera bag and more about planning experiences that inspire you. This is essential to creating great photos.



Above The kit

Ewen likes to work with prime lenses that enable him to shoot at very wide apertures, for very shallow depth-of-field effects

Right Looking down

Travel photos benefit from a range of different perspectives – here Ewen has shot from above for impact



Saturation

If you find it difficult to colour grade and balance the hues in your processing, you may well be adding too much saturation. I use a generous amount of shadow detail, reduce the saturation and bump up contrast to ensure blacks are blacks and whites are white.

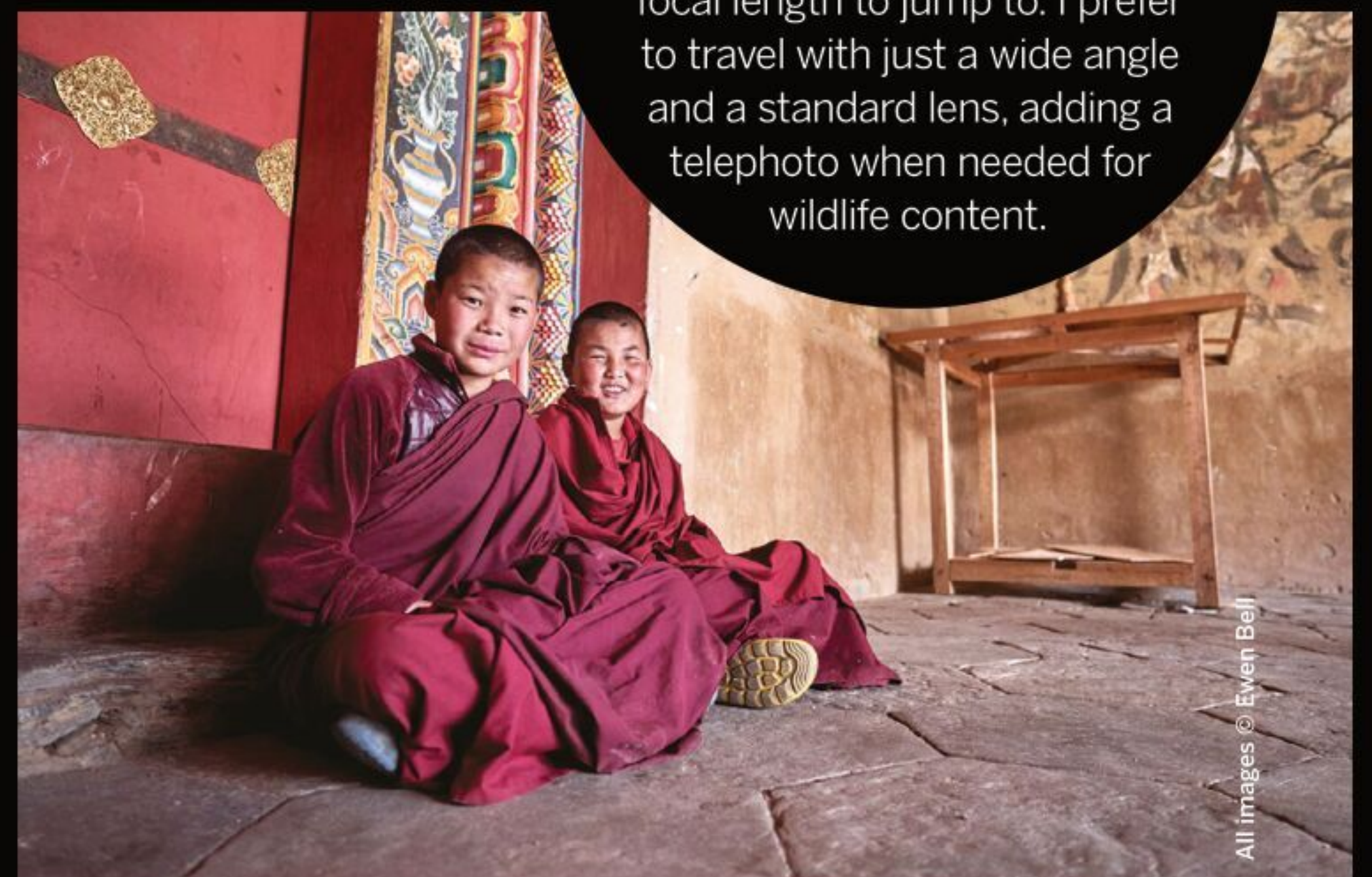


“The element of uncertainty and surprise is what I love the most”



Consider lens choice

Prime lenses are a great way to help you focus on composition. Zoom lenses will distract you from the scene, as you contemplate what focal length to jump to. I prefer to travel with just a wide angle and a standard lens, adding a telephoto when needed for wildlife content.



PRO BIO

Editorial photographer based in Australia, shooting travel and lifestyle for magazines and tourist organisations. His work appears in travel and in-flight magazines and he shoots dedicated social media content for his Australian and international clients. Having travelled to every continent on the globe he shares his photography advice at PhotographyForTravellers.com and runs a handful of photography workshops each year.


ewenbell.com

Right middle Mono matters

Travel photography tends to share a fair bit in common with documentary photography, so work in black and white, too

Right Low and wide

Shooting from a very low angle and with a wide-angle lens, often at a wide aperture, is a powerful technique that Bell employs

All images © Ewen Bell

DANIEL VOJTĚCH

How can we be fully prepared to capture that unique, fleeting moment? Daniel gives us his tips

What I love about a photograph is its uniqueness and the fact that it never repeats. The art to capture a moment – this is why I most like taking photographs. When UK Red Bull addressed me if I'd be interested in taking pictures of the British kayaker, Joe Clarke, during his unique 'Against the Tide' project, I eagerly agreed. It was not just about taking traditional pictures, it was about capturing a historical moment. When you take pictures of something similar, it may be a bit stressful. Often, you don't have much time to take the picture and you cannot repeat it. Therefore, it is good to be perfectly prepared.

Firstly, I recommend finding out something about the person being photographed. This will make it easier to create a positive relationship. And if you are taking a picture of a sport, for example, it is a good idea to learn something about it, to look at videos and a selection of the best photographs of that sport. With the internet, all this is now a piece of cake.

Another important aspect of the picture is its location. Ideally, choose a location that

you know. However, if you are taking a picture of a place that is chosen by the subject or by the client, some research needs to be done. Google Maps or a similar program is very helpful. It is also very important to find out when the photoshoot will take place and what the lighting will be like at this time. There are also applications for this, which will show you the sun's exact trajectory and other necessary information.

A quick trick

When taking a picture of an athlete's portrait, when the athlete is supposed to look like they have just completed an event, spray the portrait with a little bit of water. The athlete will look tired and sweaty, adding realism and the drops will provide more detail.

It is always good to have a plan B ready, if it rains or if the lighting is bad, for example.

The final part of the preparation is equipment. It is a good idea to use proven and tested equipment that you know well. You should decide on whether or not you will use a flash during the photoshoot, or just natural lighting. Ideally, you should make a plan and lay out the individual scenes. If there is very little time, reserve an exact, limited time for every scene. Then, during the photoshoot, set this time up on a stopwatch. By doing so, you will not get stuck on one photograph. When you are well prepared, even the most difficult photoshoots turn into pure joy, which will be visible in the results.

PRO BIO



I was born in the Czech Republic in 1986 and became fascinated with photography at an early age when I found my dad's old camera. Currently, I am based in Prague where I have my own studio but work almost everywhere on the planet. I love shooting action sports, lifestyle and commercials as well. I love clean pictures, geometric compositions, hard light and concepts.

www.danvojtech.cz/en



**Above
Portrait power**
Daniel shoots regular portraits of his sport and action subjects alongside the main images that he captures

**Left
Shoot action**
Finding the correct vantage point from which to photograph the action is one of the most important aspects

Capture the moment

When you are taking pictures of quick action and are afraid you won't have time to focus, the easiest trick is to focus in on some fixed point, where you want to capture the athlete. Then, turn the focus off and you can concentrate on the moment.

Use the light

Objects that reflect light or create shades are interesting. Thanks to these objects, you can create an interesting shot during the boring noon light. In the portrait, Joe is lit up by the sun's reflection through his paddle, which is not visible in the picture.

Experiment

Taking photos is all about finding interesting angles. Why not try taking a portrait from the bottom, or from the bird's eye point of view? Try putting the camera on a tripod and put it as high over your head as possible, taking pictures with a remote control.

Shoot to please

Always take pictures of people that they are happy with. That's what it all comes down to. Show them pictures during the photoshoot so that they can tell you their opinion. If something goes wrong, you can quickly make some changes if needed.

“Find out something about the person being photographed”

KIT BAG



Above
Busy scene
Shooting images with multiple subjects requires more compositional effort to ensure the framing is strong

Right
Portrait format
Capturing an action shot in portrait orientation is challenging but can make for a compelling image



DAVID LUND

The liquid-specialist takes us behind the scenes on this creative product shoot

This product is designed to sense water leaks and to switch off the main water supply via Wi-Fi, so the idea is that the product almost has an invisible forcefield around it, hence the flow of the water.

The brief was visual and was similar to what I created, but often the first thought when I see the visual is: how am I going to create this? Then within hours I'm testing ideas and within a day or two have the solution. I love the challenge. Last year's shoot for Baileys was similar; it appeared complicated but the end solution I created was surprisingly simple to achieve the exact effect the client required.

The way I often see these kinds of projects is quite bitterly like a jigsaw puzzle. I need to put all the various bits together to make the complete single image. In my mind I know what I need – a splash, a smooth, curved image – so we created a whirlpool effect using our drill under a hand-made fan to spin the water.

So much of my work is problem solving, I often have an instant understanding in my mind of what I need to achieve and then it's a matter of using the multitude of gadgets to create whatever mechanism I need, from a spinning, specially shaped blade to something as simple as pushing a wave of water to hit a circular glass dome. Working with liquids is fascinating.

The lighting setup is fairly simple but took some time to get absolutely right. I had a huge, specially made committed acrylic tray

to hold the water. Underneath this was a full-size blue gel, and under that a Broncolor light.

It's important when shooting water to avoid the liquid looking flat. Make sure that there is some source of small light, as it's this light that creates that rounded effect. If there was, for example, a large softbox underneath the water, the waves would have too much of an even light source, creating a very flat look. So a single light (literally a bulb, no cone or softbox used) is placed underneath. Above this as a fill light, almost acting like the sun, is a large light shooting through a scrim. This combination of a single hard light

Jigsaw

Think through all the elements, just like putting a jigsaw together. Consider the various textures and curves, even droplets for those small added tweaks. First think through the range of images needed, then start thinking about how to create them.

with a soft light creates that beautiful soft, smooth texture of water, but still maintains a sense of strong clarity and structure in the image.

Without question Photoshop is an essential tool for the work I do. The ability to take the smallest areas of a larger image and then use Liquify to bend and shape that is wonderful. A very detailed layering and building process was used to build this immense

jigsaw of liquid images.

I am often asked about filters. One filter which is indispensable to me is TOPAZ DeNoise – its ability to remove noise but repaint the clarity of an image is amazing. It's a filter I use on every single liquid shoot I create. Period.

The file sizes can also become huge: over 30 gig is common as I use so many layers, so a top-notch Mac with a solid state hard drive is a must.

Blend light sources

Like many lighting experts, Lund favours blending both soft and hard light in order to produce the most compelling results possible. However, this needs to be done with precision and care, with each of the lights carefully positioned.

Below left Many variables

This type of photography requires the ability to create a complicated setup, before one even considers shooting

Above The final shot

The completed artwork is the result of very meticulous planning, patient shooting and careful editing

The set-up

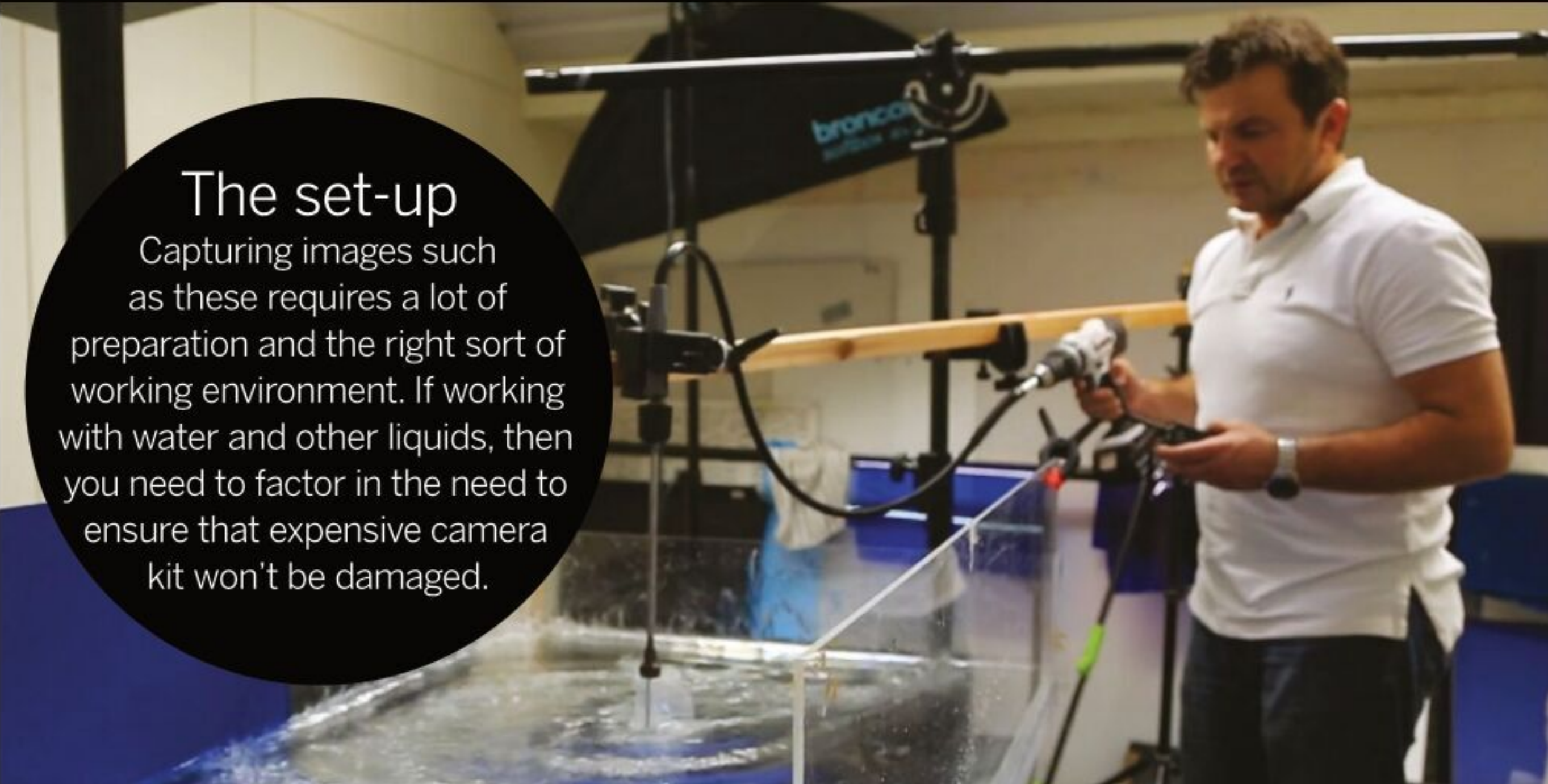
Capturing images such as these requires a lot of preparation and the right sort of working environment. If working with water and other liquids, then you need to factor in the need to ensure that expensive camera kit won't be damaged.

PRO BIO

Pro photographer David Lund thrives on tackling complex and elaborate shoots for a diverse range of clients, including many advertising agencies. He works with Hasselblad cameras and Broncolor lighting. His specialism is in capturing images of liquids, involving a huge amount of careful planning, problem solving and lighting expertise.



www.davidlund.co.uk



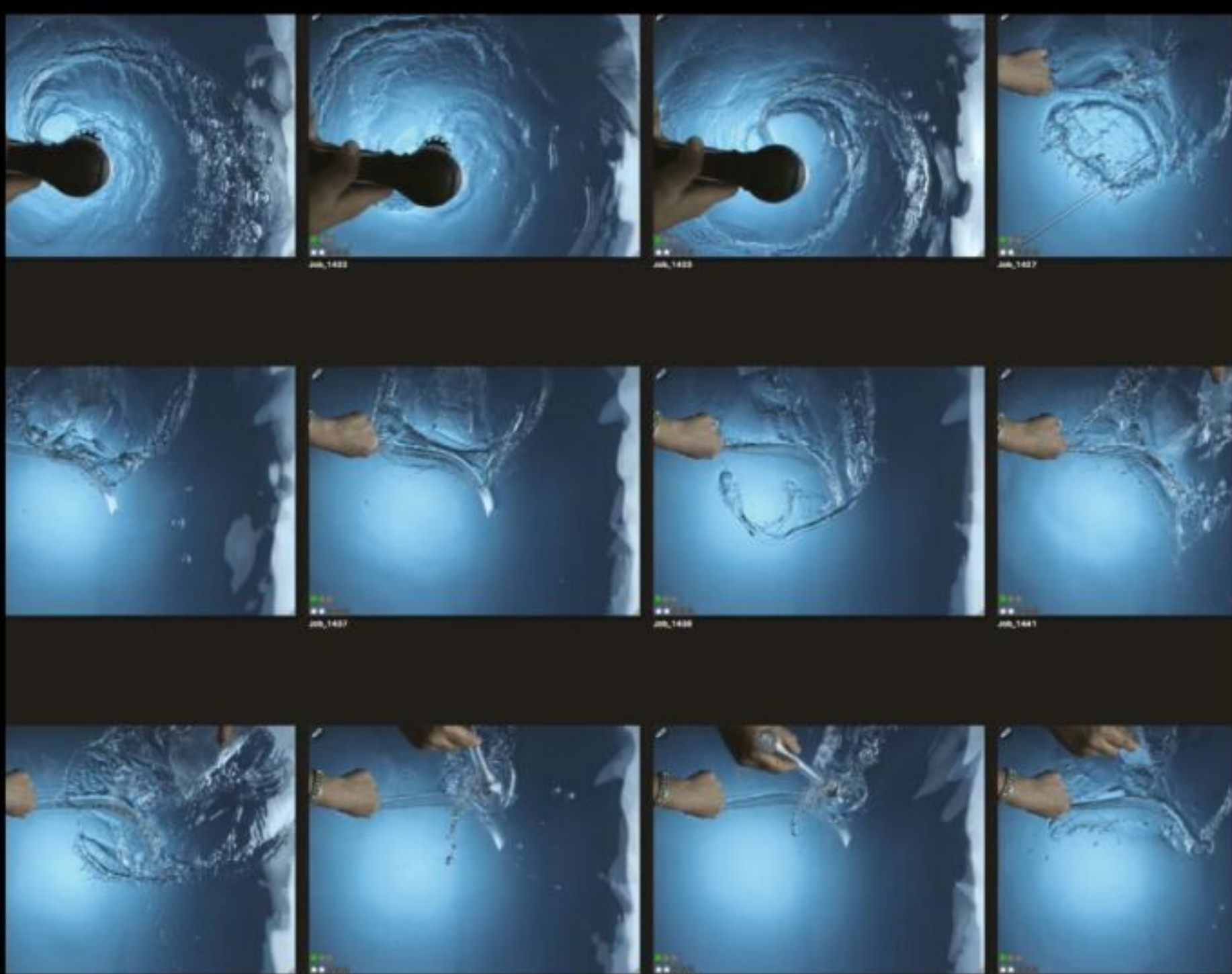


Experiment

The possibilities of what can be attempted are virtually limitless. Don't be afraid to use simple shapes, like plastic lids pushed through the water, shooting air onto the surface of the water to create ripples.

Problem solve

Although experience will help you to arrive at the results you want far quicker than you otherwise might have, there is always going to be a need for refinement and subtle tweaks to all aspects of the shoot in order to arrive at the final, perfect result.

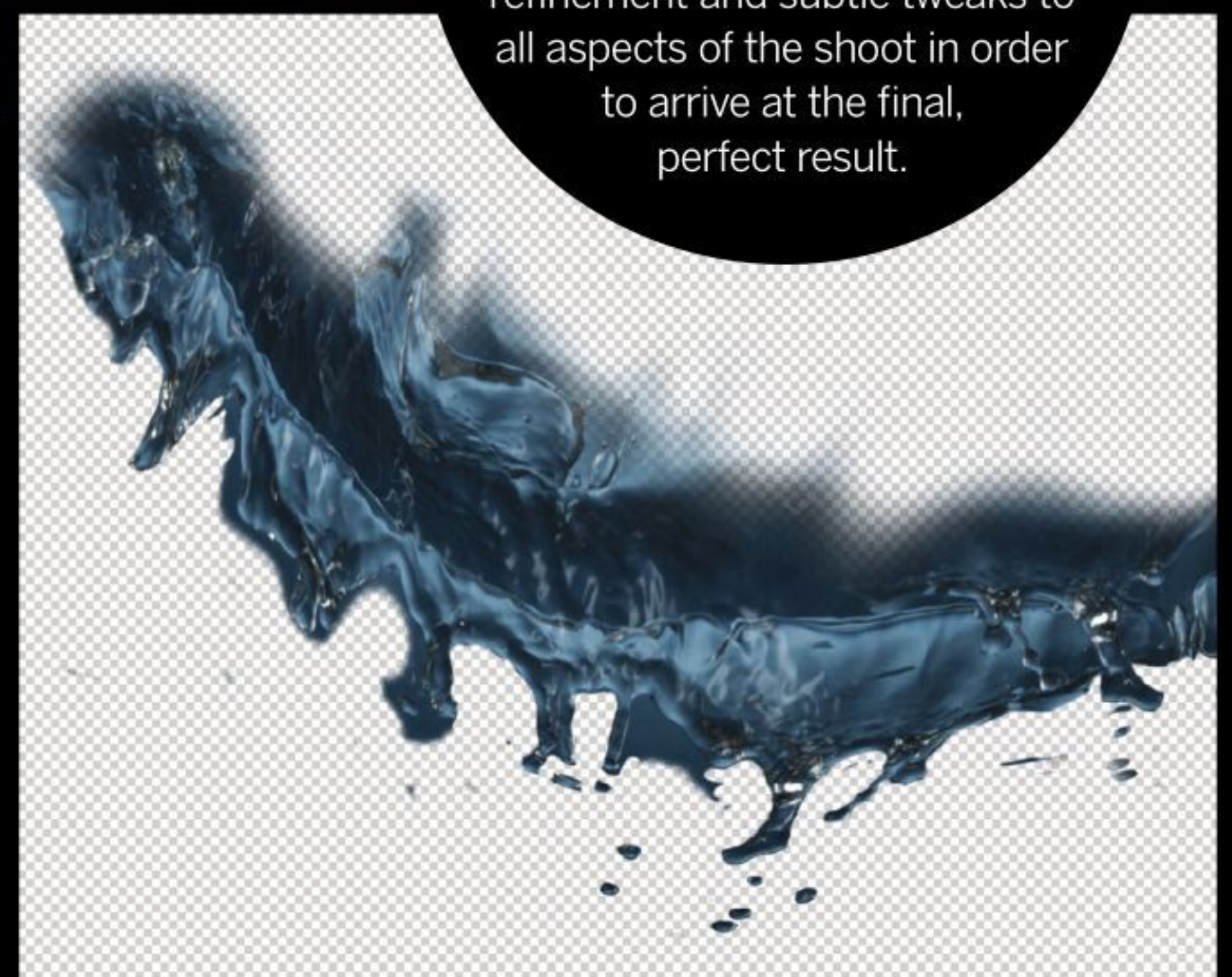


Left Creating shapes

These stills from a behind-the-scenes video David captured demonstrate the process involved when working with liquid

Right Editing

The combination of the Liquify tool and careful layering techniques can be very powerful when applied precisely



All images © David Lund

Kit isn't everything

Don't worry too much about having all of the right equipment. I think too much effort goes into having a lot of the most expensive kit. This shouldn't be the case. Use your personal skill and knowledge to make openings for yourself.



ANDREW PARSONS

Photojournalist Andrew describes a day in the life of shooting current events across the globe

My approach to the work I do is probably different to any other photographer outside newspapers. We always have to be ready for the next thing around the corner, but we never have much warning of what that next thing is. I like to be organised so my head is clear when I'm shooting, because as the saying goes you are only as good as your last photograph. If you're organised in life you can think straight when everything is in place.

Concentrate hard on the shoot. The type of photography I do can be a mental/physical strain. You might have to try every trick in the book to get someone to be photographed. If you are a commercial/portrait photographer you are being paid by the subject to take their picture. In news that's not the case. You use a lot of different social skills to make things happen in your favour. You could quite easily be photographing a really sensitive issue on a tight deadline, and now that online publications play such powerful roles in our life, every minute is a deadline.

As I co-own i-Images Picture Agency captioning is vital, as well as good keywording and presentation. You need to make your images really stand out. The picture editor will be seeing 60-70K images per day. Yours have to be at the top of the pile. It's as simple as that.

As I co-own the agency I don't have a picture editor telling me what to do or what to cover. I have to make those decisions myself then act on them and hope it's the right decision. We have about six to eight photographers in London and the same spread across the UK. My day will start just before 6am. Between 6am and 7am is the best time of the day for me. It's still quiet as the world isn't quite awake at this time. I do an hour's exercise. This sorts your head out and wakes you up. While exercising I'll be checking what's happened over night in the

New ideas

Always be considering new ideas. They might not work, but try them and see. Be willing to experiment and be ready learn from any mistakes, or if something didn't work out how you planned.

Above Heat of the action

As a press photographer running a picture agency, Andrew Parsons finds himself capturing a diverse range of events

news and listen to the *Today* programme to get a steer of what the day's agenda will be. You are constantly monitoring the news. In my office I have Sky, BBC News and Twitter on my screen going all at once. As I mainly cover politics, the Royal Family and overseas' breaking news, I head to the first assignment of the day in Westminster (passport always in the bag), while taking orders and calls from picture editors to assign our photographers to. I know a lot of reporters so I'm constantly in touch with them to bounce ideas off each other to come up with future assignments. Because we have agents selling our images all over the world, we enter different time zones all the time. So I usually finish in the office around 11pm and ready to start all over again the next day.

So my approach is never say never. Never say, "It's quiet at the moment" because as soon as you do you'll be off again.

PRO BIO



Andrew Parsons is an award-winning photojournalist and Leica Ambassador. He travels regularly with the Royal Family and with British politicians on their overseas visits. Andrew is also a respected war photographer and has covered conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon and Bosnia. He is currently nominated for this year's Royal Photographer of the Year in the UK Picture Editors' Guild awards.

www.i-images.co



Be prepared

Start the day early and get organised. An organised schedule is the key to success. This way you will ensure that you are always ready for whatever event might be waiting for you around the corner.



Stay in the know

It's now easier than ever to monitor the news and current goings-on. To make it as a photojournalist, you really need to be monitoring the news every day, and be ready to act upon what you read.

Captioning is key

Get into the habit of archiving and captioning everything. You never know when you might need it, and it might make you some money one day. It's no good shooting an image you can't locate.

Above

Be efficient

This is absolutely key to working as a press photographer – you have to get the shot quickly and efficiently

Left

Major events

Press photographers have to be on the scene when a major news story breaks – and get the shot

Below left

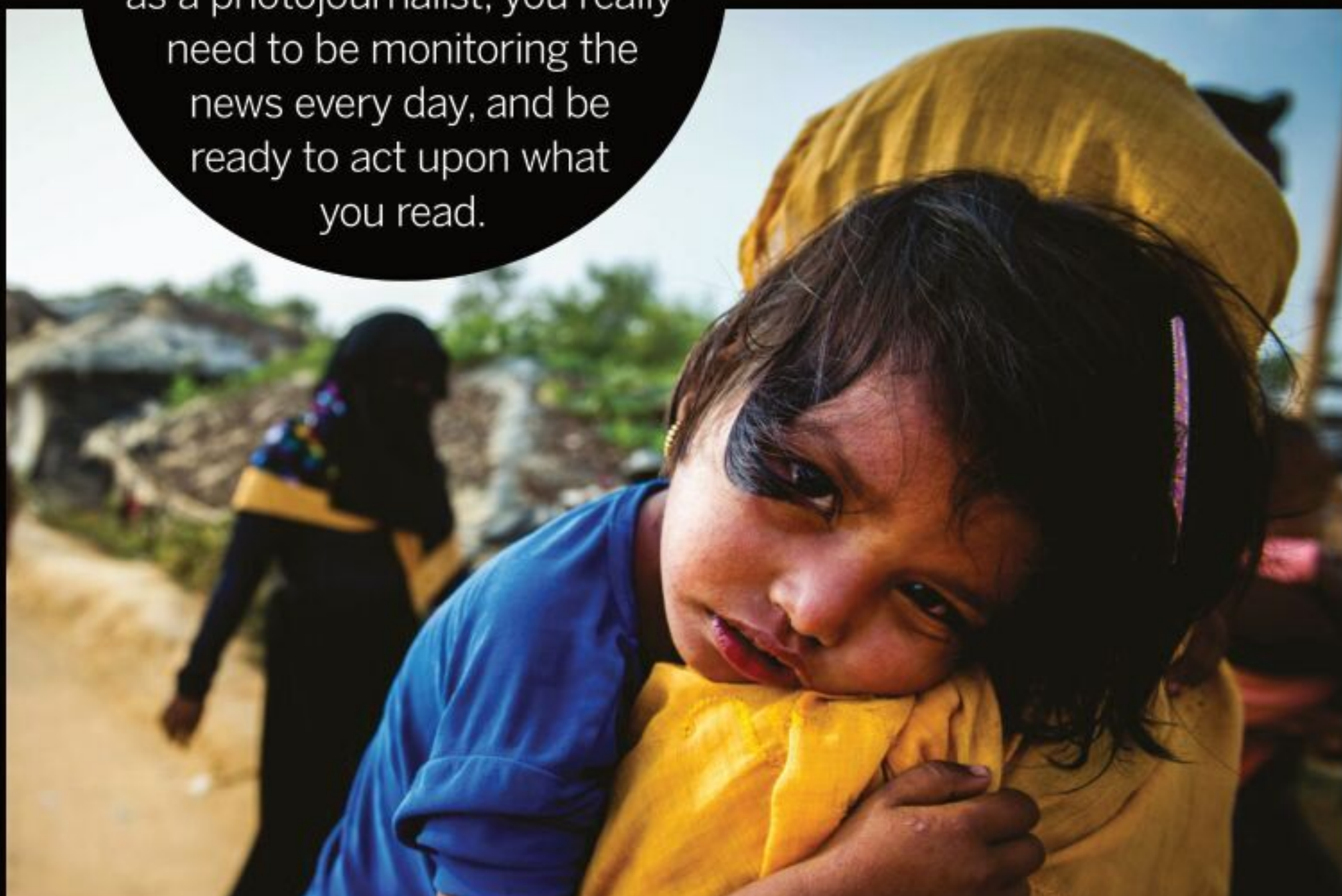
Disasters

Andrew Parsons routinely travels to troubled parts of the world to cover events, often at short notice

Below right

Expressions

Capturing those fleeting moments of a laugh or smile is a key element of this line of work



All images © Andrew Parsons

ALAN HEWITT

Discover some of the key skills you need to succeed in wildlife photography

Planning, patience and perseverance. From photographing the predators of the African Savannah to small birds closer to home in Northumberland, these 'three P's' underpin my approach to any wildlife photography assignment or project.

Although you can never be 100 per cent prepared for every situation you may encounter, some basic planning can reap rewards. I look at the weather forecast, and carefully consider my equipment needs in relation to the potential subjects and personal comfort. Remember, it's easy to overpack and become burdened by equipment. Fieldcraft is also essential – researching your subject's behaviour and habitat can help you get the shot, and in many situations is crucial in keeping you safe.

With wildlife photography, patience certainly is a virtue. I've lost count of the hours I have spent in cold, damp bird hides waiting for a certain species, or in the heat of the African sun waiting for a pride of lions to awaken. We have to remember, working with wild animals means we work on their terms, and not ours. When my morale begins

to wane, I try to envisage the potential photographs which may be just minutes away – nobody gets the photograph they desire by packing up and leaving!

When we have done our planning and tested our patience to the extreme, but still have nothing to show for our endeavours, then it is time for outright perseverance!

Know your subjects

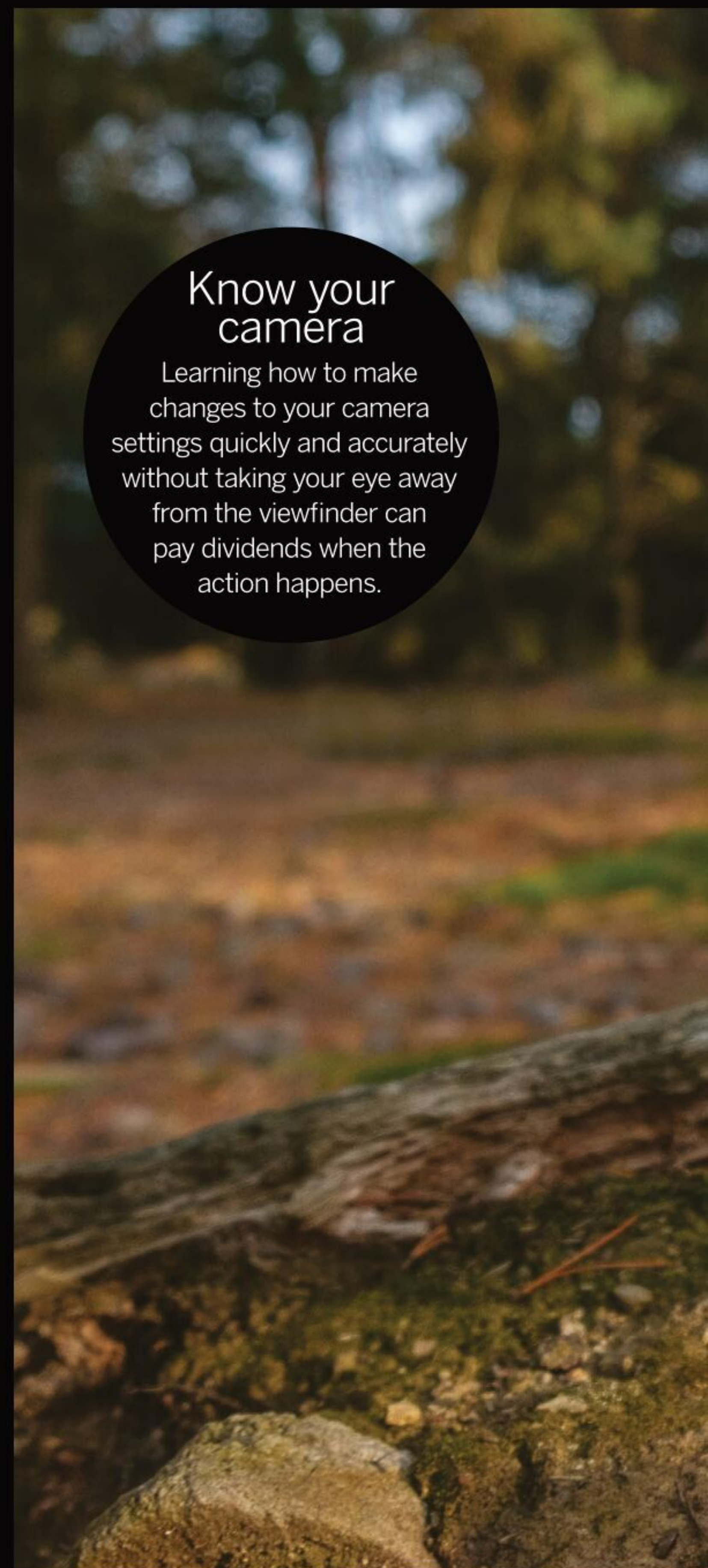
Never underestimate the value of fieldcraft. If you can read and understand your subject's behaviour then you are more likely to be ready for the action shot. More importantly, it can also help keep you and your subject safe.

Essentially this means we just keep trying. Within this it is important to learn from previous failures and make changes to our planning. I often ask myself if I am using the right equipment, could I change my position or visit the location at a different time or in different weather conditions?

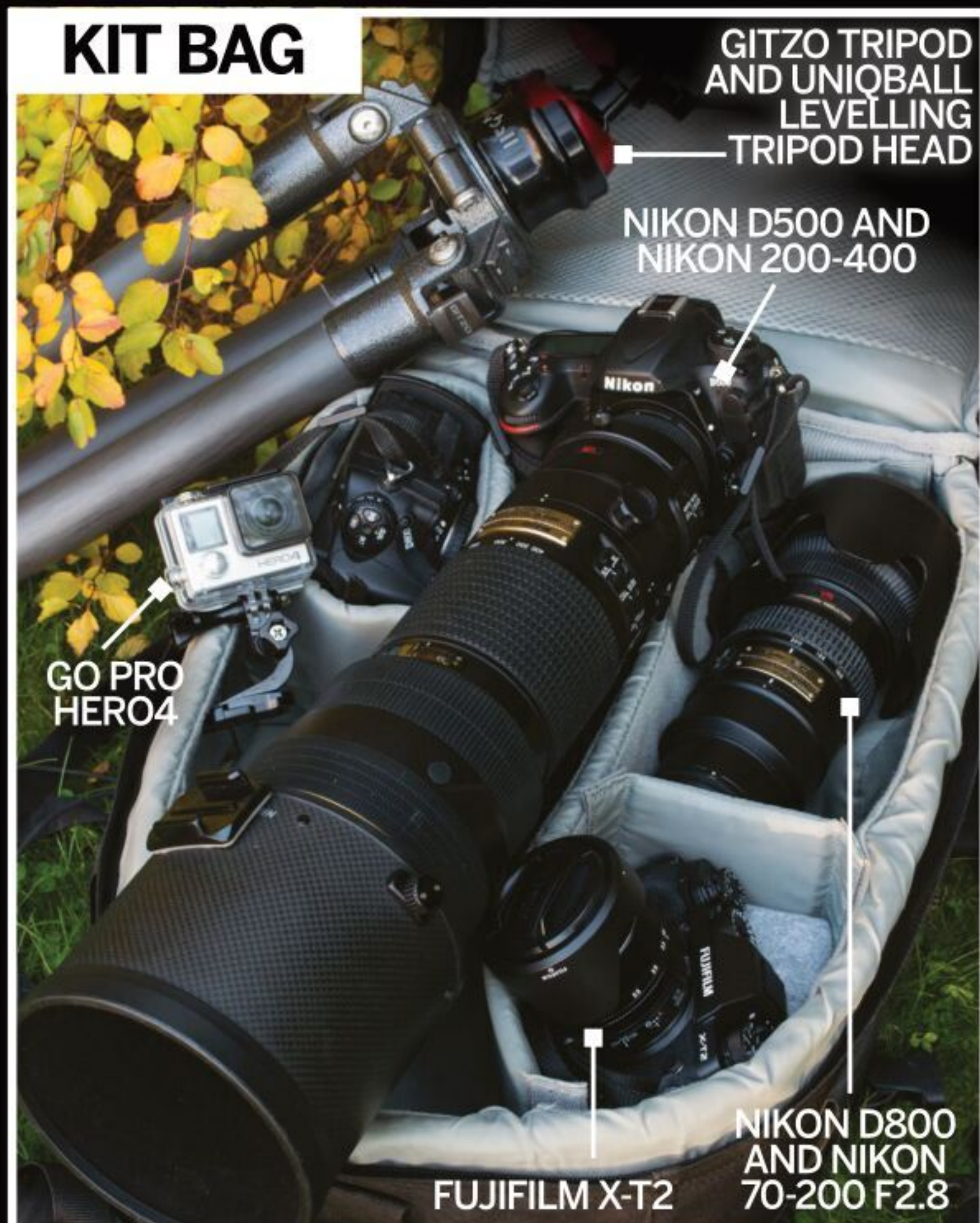
My own photography is slowly evolving towards a more contextual approach. For example, trying to photograph wildlife to include its habitat, interaction with other species or its impact on the environment. Like a lot of wildlife photography, it is an approach that can require an element of luck. But, I also believe that by keeping the three P's in mind, we can positively influence our own luck.

Know your camera

Learning how to make changes to your camera settings quickly and accurately without taking your eye away from the viewfinder can pay dividends when the action happens.



KIT BAG



GITZO TRIPOD AND UNIOBALL LEVELLING TRIPOD HEAD

NIKON D500 AND NIKON 200-400

GO PRO HERO4

FUJIFILM X-T2

NIKON D800 AND NIKON 70-200 F2.8

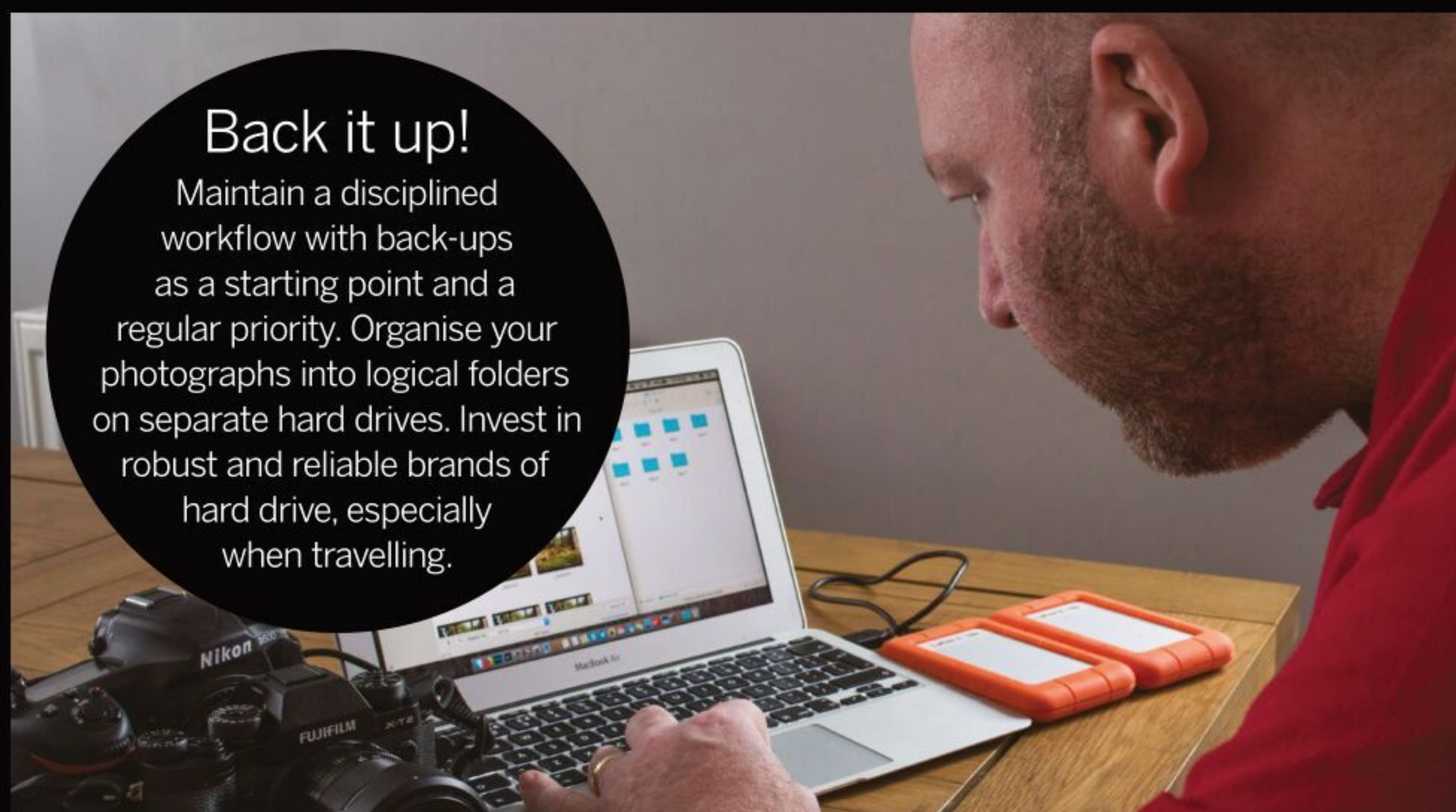
“Working with wild animals means we work on their terms, not ours”

Below Protect your work

Backing up from cameras straight to separate hard drives is a priority and the first step of my workflow

Back it up!

Maintain a disciplined workflow with back-ups as a starting point and a regular priority. Organise your photographs into logical folders on separate hard drives. Invest in robust and reliable brands of hard drive, especially when travelling.



See the bigger picture

Photographing your subject to include its habitat, relationships with other species, or more simply, against a background of incredible colour or breathtaking scenery can be so much more engaging than a close-up portrait.

Respect the wildlife

Learn to recognise signs of distress and avoid any disturbance which has an adverse effect on an animal's behaviour or surroundings. Remember, the welfare of your subject is always more important than any photograph.

Above Perfect sharpness

It's vitally important to ensure that the subject is the clear point of sharpest focus in a wildlife image like this

Right Backgrounds

Wildlife photographs can be greatly improved by paying close attention to the entire frame, including the background

PRO BIO



Alan is a freelance wildlife photographer, writer, workshop tutor and African photo safari guide. He is a supporter of local and international conservation organisations and has worked alongside wildlife charities close to home in Northumberland and further afield with anti-poaching units and predator researchers in Kenya and South Africa.

alanhewittphotography.co.uk



Reach out

If you're looking for people to photograph, use social media and don't be afraid to contact people you admire. The great thing about the world today is you can access everyone on your phone! So reach out, the worst that can happen is someone will say no!



HOLLY WREN

Portrait and lifestyle photographer Holly Wren takes us behind the scenes on a recent test shoot to provide us with some quick tips for success

I shoot environmental portraits on locations in the UK and worldwide, which keeps me on my toes. Working with natural light and flash combined, and in a variety of locations and conditions, means that no two shoots are ever the same. I have a new Nikon D850, which I use alongside a D810. My favourite lenses to use are the Nikkor 50mm f1.4 and the new Nikkor 70-200mm f2.8E FL lens, with the 85mm f1.4 for closer portraits. My kit bag contains Nikon and Profoto, for which I am a self-confessed addict.

My shots are generally evenly lit, high key and soft. I use shallow depth of field, and like to stick to around f4.5 or lower. My approach to lighting depends on the shot, but I tend to layer flash as required and blend natural light with flash in a way that makes it difficult to tell what I've used.

I am inspired and interested in people, my commercial work tells stories of businesses, products and services, I quite often photograph 'real' people who work with the brands I'm promoting. For my personal work

I look for more intimate narratives, around social issues. Last year I travelled to Oaxaca, Mexico and documented the indigenous communities that live there and whose traditions are slowly being lost. My

last exhibition in 2016 was about elderly people and their love stories. I like to tell a story alongside images, and enjoy exploring more unusual places; I find inspiration in learning about different cultures and people.

I like to plan, be prepared and I work hard on controlling all the details of a shoot that I can. My aim is to get an image through connecting with the person, which I feel is easier when you've taken the time to talk to them.

For this test shoot I photographed Jade, a tattoo artist I contacted through Instagram. I thought she had a really strong look with her tattoos and asked to take her portrait. We used the studio she works in as a location in East London, and I shot firstly using only natural light and then using a Profoto B2 with three-foot octabox, finally combining a B2 with grid and an A1 with gel.

Push yourself

It's easy to keep producing the same work, and developing a style is important, but don't forget to push yourself. Use the natural light in a new way, try a different lens or angle. It might look terrible, but it could also be the best shot you've ever taken!

Above left Subtle lighting

When a professional portrait photographer carefully balances flash and ambient light, the results typically appear very naturalistic

Above right Profoto power

Holly favours the use of Profoto lighting equipment for her portraits, a system that enables her to create elegant lighting in a range of locations

“Connect with the person, which I feel is easier when you've taken the time to talk to them”

PRO BIO



Holly Wren is a commercial portrait and lifestyle photographer based in London. Working to create marketing and advertising campaigns, Holly has been busy photographing people since 2012. She was inspired by her granddad's love of photography, and believes her down-to-earth nature is what helps her get the best from her subjects. Holly is passionate about creating images that add value, and communicate stories.

www.hollywren.com

KIT BAG

PROFOTO B2 HEAD AND BATTERY PACK

NIKON
50MM 1.4

NIKON
85MM 1.4G

PROFOTO
TTL AIR
TRIGGER

PROFOTO
A1

NIKON D850

Light carefully

It's not about the most expensive or powerful light, it's about the appropriate light. Consider your use and needs, along with your style. The natural light might be more than enough, so don't be seduced by fancy lighting setups if you don't need them.

Right Look away

Professional portraits often consist of the subject looking off into the distance, rather than at the camera – directing the model is key

Below Avoid distortion

Always be aware of the optical characteristics of the lenses you are working with – you don't distort the image unless you want a creative effect



Above Work close

Your portrait subjects must be able to trust you as a person and as a photographer, to enable you to work within their personal space

Below Smooth the skin

It's very important for portrait photographers to spend time editing their images and making essential corrections such as smoothing the skin

Plan

Always research, ask questions and gather information about your subject and location. This will help you make key equipment decisions but also enable you to begin to envisage the images you want and help you direct and design the final outcome.

Test shoot

Organise test shoots, they'll help you develop your photography style and skills, and create a portfolio that represents the type of images you want to produce. This is learning through experience, there is no better way!



PETER EASTWAY

Landscape photographer gives us his suggestions for capturing and interpreting a scene

I don't have one single approach to photography or a single camera outfit, because different genres require quite distinct skill sets and equipment.

For landscape photography, my aim is to capture the best-quality pixels possible, which in turn will allow me to produce the highest quality image in post-production – and large prints.

I start with a 100-megapixel medium-format digital back and build the system around that. I use the A-Series Phase One with a 23mm HR Alpagon ultra wide-angle lens (made by Rodenstock). It is the sharpest, cleanest glass I have ever used, but as a camera, it is completely manual in operation – even a clockwork shutter. However, whatever shooting restrictions it imposes are forgotten when looking at the wonderful file quality.

At longer focal lengths, I take advantage of Phase One's XF camera and its Schneider Kreuznach optics. This relatively new camera body is a delight to use and the autofocus system is incredibly precise. What we take for granted with 20-megapixel camera systems becomes a lot more exacting with 100 megapixels, because focusing errors are easily seen.

Using medium format introduces a need for precise, methodical camera technique.

I use a Really Right Stuff carbon fibre tripod with metal spikes, and an Arca-Swiss Cube head. Almost all my landscape photos are shot tripod mounted.

People think medium format is all about the number of pixels, but far more important is the dynamic range (up to 15 stops on an IQ3 100MP) and the ability to draw detail out of the shadows. This is especially important for me because I'm paranoid about clipping my highlights – I'm adverse to having light areas without tone or detail in my prints, so I might underexpose by 2/3 EV just to be sure there is no 'clipping'. This in turn makes it incredibly important to be able to pull detail out of the shadows.

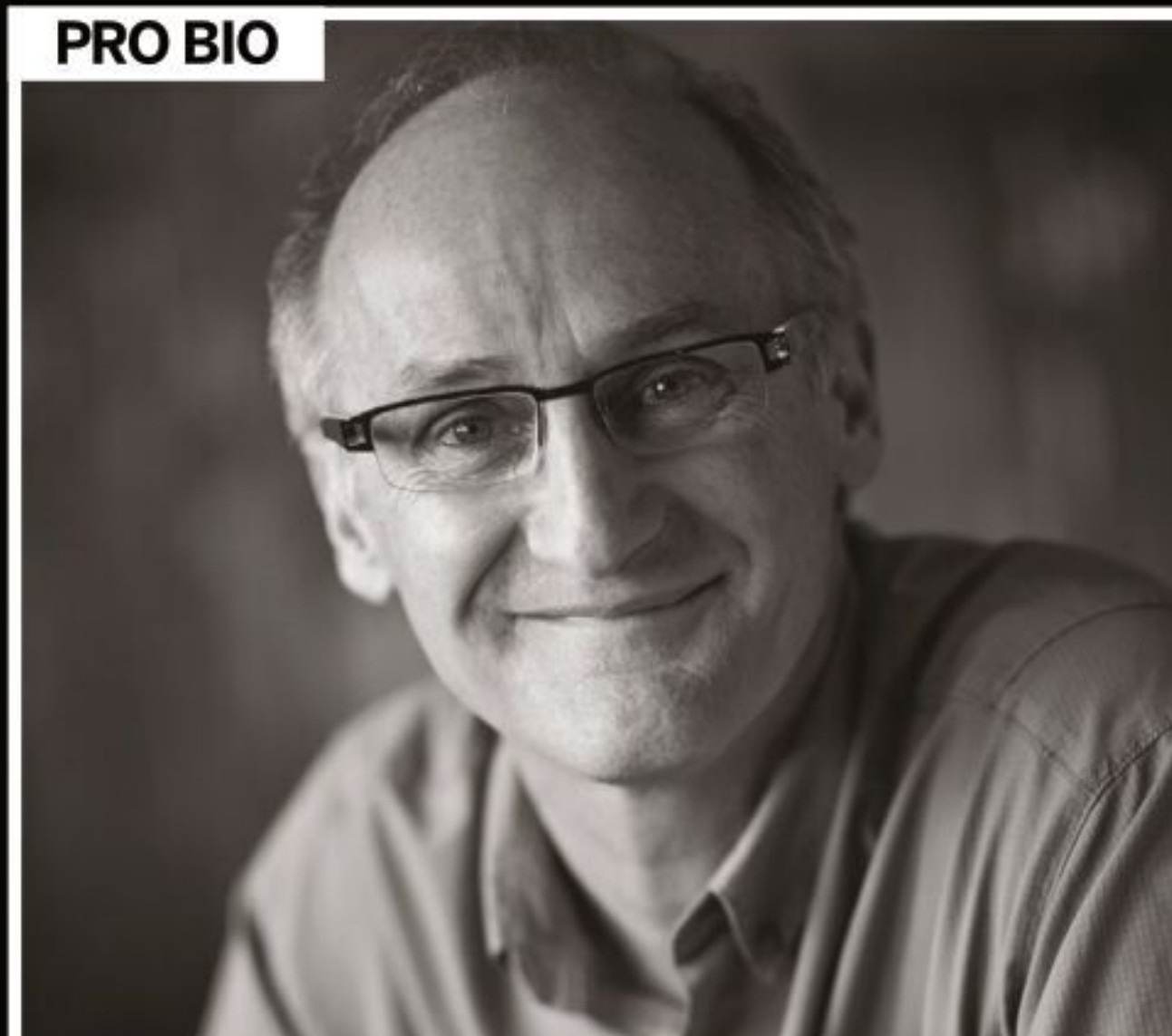
So, my process of capturing is very structured, but once I take my photos into post-production, anything goes. Reality is one option, interpretation another – and I prefer the latter. RAW files start in Capture One and are usually finished in Photoshop.

“Using medium format introduces a need for methodical camera technique”

Telephoto lenses

Landscape photography is as much about what you leave out of the frame as what you include. I don't like distracting edges. Telephoto lenses help isolate and simplify compositions and I use them extensively for landscapes.

PRO BIO



Peter Eastway is an Australian professional photographer who has been writing for photography magazines all his life. Known for his stylistic approach to landscape photography and post-production, he has worked closely with Phase One and Capture One, and he featured in the *Tales By Light* television series (currently on Netflix), produced in partnership with Canon Australia. He is a two-times winner of the Australian Professional Photographer of the Year.

www.petereastway.com

Right Processing

Peter Eastway's work doesn't rely on a literal recreation of the scene. He prefers to opt for an interpretation of the location rather than a document

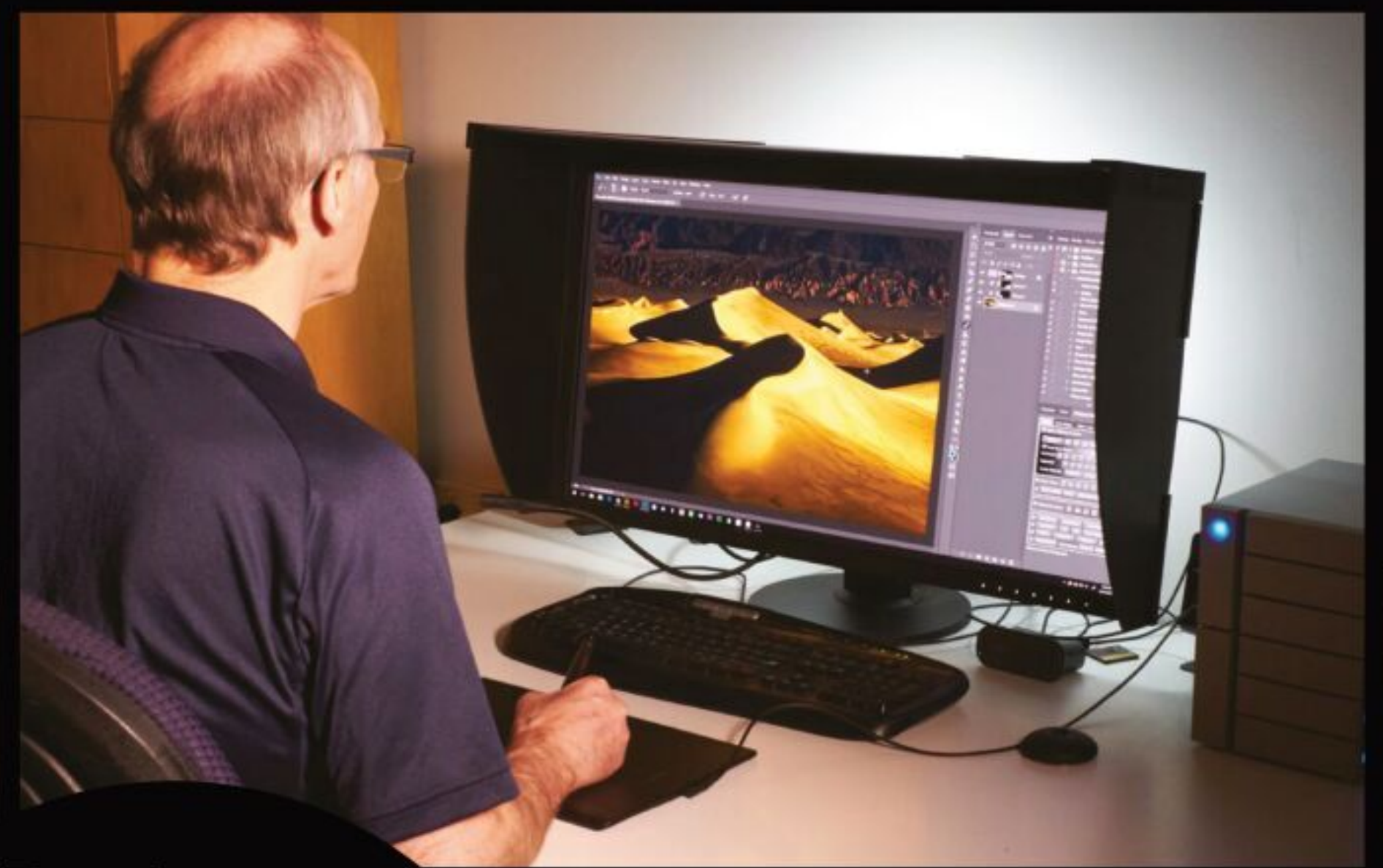
Below Quality matters

Peter places a very strong emphasis on using high-quality equipment, so that he has the best possible pixels to work with when it comes to the editing stage

Use of black

During capture, I try not to 'clip' my exposures, retaining detail in both the highlights and shadows. However, in post-production I love the use of dark shadows with just a hint of detail, as this also creates a sense of mystery.





Right top
Death Valley

Peter Eastway shooting at Mesquite Flat Sand Dunes, Death Valley, USA, with his Phase One medium-format outfit

Right bottom
Post-production

Peter editing with his Eizo ColorEdge CG318 and Wacom Intuos Pro

Pen better than mouse

Wacom's Intuos pen and tablet are essential for my masking work. Most of my adjustment layers use masks to control the effect and using a pen makes drawing these masks much easier. I could never go back to an awkward mouse.

A good monitor is essential

Perhaps the most important part of my workflow is an Eizo ColorEdge CG318 monitor. A correctly calibrated and profiled monitor ensures your post-production is accurate. I can't work without a good monitor.

Colour balance

I use auto white balance in the field, but as I am capturing RAW files, I retain complete control over the colour balance in the final image. While reality is a good place to start, thoughtful use of colour can create mood and emotion.

TECHNIQUES

Teamwork

Make use of the experience of your team. Make-up artists, stylists and art directors live and breathe their profession, so allow them to bring their experience to the shoot so you can concentrate on your job as a photographer.



Above
Work with an assistant

An extra pair of hands on a fashion shoot can make a massive difference to the results you can achieve

Left top
Use the environment

Seasoned fashion photographers know how to use elements of the environment



Keep pushing on

Learn to live with rejection. A “no” from an agency or a client is not necessarily a reflection of your work. You’re the right person for a client right now, you just have to be persistent enough to find them.



Above
Add some flash

The use of light to supplement or dominate the natural light is an essential fashion skill

Left below
Posing power

Fashion portraits are often distinguished by the style of the look and feel of the model’s pose and expression

PRO BIO



My name is Tina Eisen. I’m a fashion photographer near London, UK, with a passion for editorial beauty. I regularly speak at trade shows and educational events for well-known brands such as Canon and Profoto or write articles for blogs and magazines. My clients include Canon, Profoto, Harvey Nichols, ASOS, Marks & Spencer, Amazon, Barbour and numerous other well-known brands.

www.tinaeisen.com

TINA EISEN

How to continually develop your skills as a fashion photographer

Although I shoot a lot of commercial fashion work on a daily basis, my true passion is in editorial photography, specifically beauty. Rather than capturing the reality you see in commercial and portrait work, I'm interested in creating an illusion, a fictional story that draws the viewer closer, transforming the model into a character, an actress in the story I'm telling.

With photography, as with most things in life, in order to become good at it you have to practise relentlessly, invest time and never stop learning. If I don't shoot I will most likely be found planning personal projects, brainstorming ideas, assembling teams and networking with lots of like-minded creatives.

While I wouldn't sell myself short and produce work for free, I'm a strong believer in creative test shoots. While these tests are 'free' in a monetary sense, I treat every single one as a job and an investment into my career.

Personal projects and tests are the key to developing my skills. I can invest valuable time in trying new products and techniques and networking with industry professionals, but they are also a way to produce content and get my work seen, as well as being mini practice rounds for the kind of paid assignments I want to attract.

When my camera is turned off, I try to make sure that my brain stays switched on. I try to constantly stay tuned in to things that inspire me. This could be as simple as browsing a fashion magazine and absorbing images that inspire me, or things that surround me. I'm madly in love with nature, its beauty, shapes, patterns and colours, and you will find those influences throughout my photography work.

While not every fashion and beauty photographer might be an expert when it comes to fashion and make-up (that's what stylists and make-up artists are for, after all...), surrounding myself and looking at great fashion and beauty images gives me an idea of industry standards. The more I look at examples of pictures done right, the more I will train my eye in the aesthetic of the industry, which will ultimately help me when making decisions on set and when selecting images post shoot.

Keep practising

Invest time into your skill. The more you shoot the better you get. The same goes for planning shoots and communicating ideas. Personal projects are the best way to polish these skills while sprucing your portfolio. Never stop learning.

Tune in to the industry

Surround yourself with the work you'd like to produce. Are you dreaming about being a fashion photographer? Pick up magazines and consciously watch the ads. You'll develop a taste for the industry's standards.

Get your work out there

Don't be afraid to show off your work. This is a visual industry, in order to get noticed and booked you have to find ways to show your work to the world. A beautiful website is as important as good social media engagement.

KIT BAG



KICK-START YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS

Learn to minimise your start-up costs and make your business profitable from the beginning

Running a successful photography enterprise in today's competitive market is a challenge, even for those already established. Entering the industry, as a startup, is a profoundly daunting endeavour and should only be considered if you have a water-tight business plan and a clear niche to fill. Once you have identified your market space, it is essential to map out your required outlay and devise the best ways to minimise your costs. This step should be done with your particular genre in mind, as only then can you selectively cut costs, whilst still fulfilling your client's requirements. It is a false economy to reduce outlay by omitting essential items from your equipment list, which will complicate your daily operations and potentially compromise the quality of the service you offer. There are several key areas that a new working

photographer can assess for unnecessary financial drain, without this occurring.

Firstly, consider buying second-hand gear, at least for use during your first year of trading. Professional-level cameras are expensive to purchase new and, until you are confident of your market demand, are unsettlingly large contributors to your fixed costs. Used cameras, of the professional grade, will likely have many shutter actuations left in their lifespan, while lenses should have the same optical quality as the day they were constructed, all at a discounted price. Furthermore, since large-format printers are another big investment, a popular choice amongst photographers with low print yields is to outsource this to dedicated online printing companies. While this becomes less economical as your output increases, it is initially more efficient than printing in-house.

KICK-START YOUR PHOTOGRAPHY BUSINESS

Build for your genre

Knowing your intended field will help when outfitting your studio or kitbag, as it will cut down on unnecessary purchases that will see little use

All images © Ghene Snowdon

Shoot for the gear

Creative flexibility is key to an efficient and sustainable production of content

Instead of buying photographic equipment when a requirement seems to present itself, attempt to work with the inverse philosophy and adapt your shooting style to the gear you currently own. Often you will find that by altering your framing and lighting approach, you can make more efficient use of your existing kit, without negatively impacting on the quality of your images. If you own a single speedlight, for example, emphasise directional light effects before considering investing in a second unit. Your clients should never see any quality discrepancies; only if this is in danger of occurring should you consider buying new items.



Besides the financial advantages, shooting with minimalist gear simplifies your shoots and can help you define your baseline style, which you can develop based on reactions from clients

TECHNIQUES



Probably the largest sink of capital in any photography business is a studio. Besides rent costs, energy usage, customer comforts and maintenance are all outgoings which are difficult to scale. While a high-street presence can bring new custom, a physical 'shop' can be more of a hindrance to growth than an asset, early in your business's development. Consider working exclusively online, until you have built a more extensive client list. Working from home and generating revenue through a website has far smaller operating costs and also offers you greater mobility. You won't be limited to a single location and will have the flexibility to travel to your customers, instead of trying to draw them to you. Moreover, in the worst of circumstances, should your business model fail, you have the option to shift your approach, with minimum commitments. Alternatively, you might contemplate hiring some studio

space, on a temporary basis, either for single shoots or on a rolling agreement. This gives you shooting versatility and high-street visibility in the community, but with lower risk and expenditure. Similarly, when you approach a time at which you feel confident enough to take on your own studio space, experiment with sharing facilities with another photographer. Assuming there will be little crossover between your work, this will benefit you both, through splitting of fixed expenses. The wider advantage is that this cost dilution will enable you to purchase a wider range of specialist gear, better outfitting your business for a greater variety of assignments, but with less individual risk. By keeping your overall expenditure concise, the early days of your photography business can be both financially viable and enjoyable, setting the foundations for a well-performing, long-term venture.



Above left **Grow your business**

Learning to effectively cap the initial start-up costs will help to give you the best foundations for a scalable enterprise

Above **Keep it simple**

Professional-quality images don't always require complex lighting setups. Only add new lights and accessories when necessary to achieve a certain style

Define your genre

Starting as a specialist is a good way to build a focused business with lean expenses

As a new competitor in the market, it is always advisable to have a focused strategy and clear customer base. There is another benefit however – streamlining your target genre to a specific type of image (wedding, portrait etc.) means narrower gear requirements and therefore, fewer surplus items. Providing multiple services may increase footfall into your studio, but your overall operation can quickly become complex and less manageable. Start small for a greater initial profit margin.



Having a tighter focus on the genres in which you intend to specialise has benefits for both initial outlay on resources and market penetration



Left **Job value**

Use larger jobs, such as weddings, as a means of advertising your availability, securing future bookings and adding longer-term value to each assignment



BUILD AN IMAGE LIBRARY



Tips for building a business

Ghene divulges her expert advice on how to succeed when first starting out with a new photography business

- Conduct a market study and write your business plan** I went in head first when I started and I ended up like a fish swimming in a vast ocean without direction. This bit will also help you price yourself accordingly.
- Choose your equipment wisely** Reliable brands you can afford with very good customer support helps a lot.
- Insure everything** Make sure there is a way for you to locate your property.
- You can't be a Jack of all photography** Start by choosing which genres you like the most, then focus on that.
- Network** Make friends with other photographers, stylists, retouchers, creative people... A good network of creatives will give you constructive criticism should you need it, and ideas should you get stuck, but will also support you. They help you grow – my creative network did.

Pro case study



Ghene Snowdon (snowdon.photography) describes her experience of building a profitable photography business

What were the greatest challenges you found as a start-up business?

The first is setting yourself apart from other photographers and communicating that effectively. The next is how to run the business, finding clients and keeping them engaged. If you want to make this venture work, you'll have to be organised and recognise what you want to do early on.

How did you overcome these challenges?

I attended business management and marketing seminars, watched a lot of

CreativeLive videos and got help from London Business Centre (now www.nwes.org.uk). I had a mentor who helped me write my business plan, then apply for funding for studio equipment. He provided answers to any of my business-related questions. I also kept an eye on any available resources from reliable websites. At the end of the day, your passion and ambition are your best assets to make this work. Do not be disheartened when things are slow, just keep your eyes on the prize. I keep a nice balance between family life, photography and my other interests. Regarding my style and what sets me apart, I rely on my personal preferences and experiment with what works with clients.

How did you keep your start-up costs as low as possible?

In order to keep costs low, you have to prioritise with the essentials and work

Above left Creative business
Ghene highlights the independent skills of taking great photographs and running a successful business. Understanding how both relate to each other can help reduce costly mistakes

Above People person
Ghene Snowdon specialises in portrait, headshot, family portrait and wedding photography, having started and run her own photography business more than ten years ago

out what's best for your target market and budget. Photography is an expensive endeavour, with expensive equipment you need to renew regularly. Know what you need to do the job and don't buy gear because you might need it one day. It helped that I work from home. I don't spend too much on marketing materials and fads. I host and manage my own website and use a free cloud-based client management software and network. There are a lot of people out there who can help you.

MAXIMISE ASSIGNMENT VALUE

Make your photography jobs work for you by creating long-term benefits for your business

At its most basic, any photography job is a simple business transaction – the exchange of a service for money. Many tasks that a professional photographer may undertake during their career will be this simple – one-time customers requesting image creation for a predetermined price. While these contribute to the overall profitability of a business, in the competitive market of today, it is more important than ever for photographers to secure loyalty in their customer base and, in turn, repeat business. A marketing budget is an unavoidable necessity for promoting the quality of your images and to attract new custom, but existing clients and the assignments they generate are an often overlooked source of future revenue. It is possible to use each job you undertake

to open up further opportunities, thereby extending the value of each commission.

The most logical approach is to use your clients and jobs to gain additional commissions within the same or related genres; for example, portrait sessions are most likely to introduce you to further customers in the market for portrait photography, especially on a business-to-customer (B2C) basis. When issuing clients with their images, include a brochure of information on other related photography packages, should they decide to return to you or pass the information to friends and family. For non-commercial consumers, keep your pitch concise – don't advertise all of your services, as many will have little meaning to them. It is better to appear as a specialist in these cases. On larger non-commercial jobs,

such as weddings, carry information with you regarding a greater variety of your work areas, such as portraiture, property or other event photography, which may interest people you meet on location. In these situations, take advantage of what is essentially a captive audience and draw interest to a wider, but still related, spectrum of your specialisms.

Whilst shooting for commercial customers, the range of networking opportunities is more varied. Sometimes job value can be expended without directly leading to further income. New job types introduce you to new clients, but also new business contacts. Whilst on shoots, or during production, take the opportunity to build relationships with other industry professionals, such as printers, framers or venue managers, with whom you can organise mutually beneficial

Seize opportunities

In professional photography, the most profitable assignments are those which generate further business or open new revenue streams, securing future jobs with new or existing clients

All images © Peter Medicott

Make your brand visible

Use every shoot as a marketing tool and stand out in online searches

Every time you finish a shoot, especially when working a novel genre, be sure to promote it online. Many photographers run a blog where they detail their current work. Even with infrequent posting or a restricted readership, with careful keywording, blog posts can be very effective at placing your website high in search engine rankings. After a shoot, write a short post with some text explaining the purpose of the shoot, accompanied by some images. Then add relevant keywords including the subject, shoot type, and importantly, the location. This is an easy way to promote both your genre-specific skills and your business in general.



TECHNIQUES



Right

Nike campaign

Strong clients are the key route to business growth. Use introductions to large customers as an opportunity to gain access to resources, such as larger studio spaces, equipment and social reach

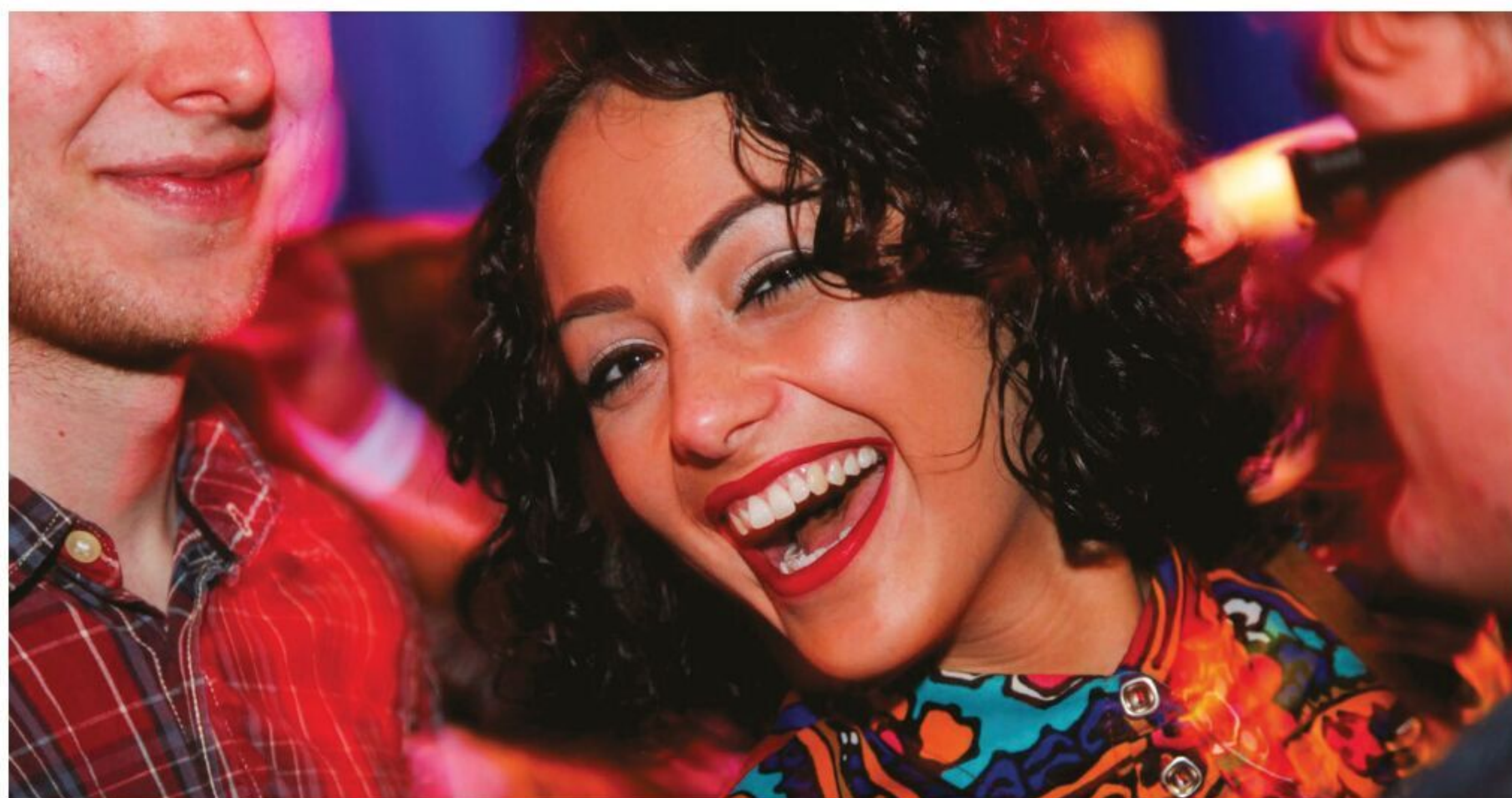
Right below

People power

Human input is the greatest contributor to job success, from satisfied clients to human resources. Use jobs to build networks of people in the industry who can help you realise your photographic and business strategies

arrangements. This may help to cut costs of location access or image output on future assignments and grows your immediate business network. Due to the often specific requirements of commercial customers, be sure to look for opportunities to secure business-to-business commissions. If shooting on location, look for the chance to introduce yourself to representatives of interested parties. If shooting products, such as cosmetics, for a retailer, you may get an opportunity to meet ambassadors for the manufacturer, who often oversee presentations of their items at larger stores. This may provide avenues to further jobs directly with these suppliers.

An additional benefit of networking with clients in new industries is the chance to broaden your professional portfolio, by adding new subjects and styles, which can provide tremendous long-term value as your business grows and evolves. Many branches of the industry may seem impenetrable to even the most seasoned photographer, simply due to an apparent lack of experience. Having example images to show prospective customers can make a big difference to your brand's influence and appeal.



Make a good first impression

How you present your business determines secondary job success

Business cards are often the first 'official' introduction of a client to your brand. When on assignments and looking for future opportunities, simply writing your business details on a scrap of paper will not effectively convey your professionalism. Try generating a QR code for your cards for instant viewing of your website, and always carry a tablet or notebook computer so you can display work samples relevant to the current shoot. Make it easy for potential customers to book your services.



In the modern age of instant image sharing, the appeal of interactive portfolios has extended into the professional arena. Appearing to embrace current business trends can increase your future success



Pro case study



Pro photographer and commercial light-painting expert Peter Medlicott (petermedlicott.com)

describes his business approach

How long have you been shooting commercially?

I've been shooting commercially for the past 15 years or so. Over that time I've built a strong client base and good reputation for commercial and editorial photography briefs, but I also specialise in light graffiti and produce work for major brands and exhibitions around the world.

What are the greatest challenges of your area of work?

Not enough time in the day! Juggling big commissions and day-to-day commercial shoots means that sometimes I have to burn the candle at both ends – but then, you only get good things out of a business if you're prepared to put the hours and the effort in. From a creative perspective, I suppose one of the biggest challenges for photographers is the public's and business's perception of value with regards to photography – but that's a story for another day!

“I focus on building relationships and delivering a great service to keep the clients coming back”

How do you increase long-term value of commercial assignments?

I focus on building relationships and delivering a great service to keep the clients coming back. A client is doing their job just like anyone else and the more reliable and convenient your service is, the better. I operate two different models within my business: with light painting and creative commissions I work either on a project basis or sell image licenses and retain the control of the imagery. However, for more day-to-day

commercial assignments, I offer inclusive packages that allow the client the freedom to use the images however they need to. I find that in the UK, on the whole, clients don't respond well to the concept of licensing (or as it was once described, 'renting') images. They feel that they have paid for a shoot and so the images should be theirs to use as they see fit. Tread carefully!

See more of Peter's light graffiti work at lightbombing.com

Above
Concrete rainbow
Peter is an expert in graphic light-painting imagery, which he uses as a commercial branch of his photographic business brand

Consider commercial differences

Peter describes how commercial client buying behaviour compares to that of customers in other photographic genres

“The majority of my creative assignments are one-off or project-based fees – it helps to keep things straightforward and simple for both myself and the clients' budgets. I also generate sales through image licensing for my light-painting images – partly through stock agencies but predominantly direct with the clients who find me through my online presence. A long while ago I chose not to shoot assignments such as weddings, as I simply don't have the time to be a retailer and offer the level of service and options that the couple quite rightly demands.”

KEEP YOUR BUSINESS EFFICIENT

Discover 10 top tips to help you ensure the successful running of your photography business

Build around your specialisms

Focusing on one genre, or areas of photography with similar resources, enables you to have a focused business plan and to more easily track the profitability of your assignments

All images © Paul Wilkinson

1 Maximise space usage

A studio is a big investment, the main reason for which is the requirement for space. It is essential therefore that you make the most of it. Think of each unit of space in your studio in terms of cost and look to utilise each unit for a profitable return, dividing the overall running cost by floor area. Think outside the box if you have excess – selling prints on display for example.

2 Keep equipment in use

Your next biggest fixed cost will be photographic equipment, so you will need to maximise its usage in order to ensure a good Return on Investment (ROI). This applies to the benefit of owning a piece of kit to your business, but also has implications for maintenance. Printers for example require continuous use to prevent nozzle clogging, which can generate repair outlay.

3 Decide whether to buy or hire gear

Not every assignment will yield repeat business of the same type and requirements, meaning that, should you wish to take on such a job, investing in lots of specific equipment may not be a financially viable decision. This is where gear hiring becomes extremely useful – temporarily renting a camera, specialist lens or accessory opens up unique jobs, without producing extensive lists of underused assets.

4 Avoid stock buildup

Buying small stock in bulk is a great way of keeping costs down, however there is little advantage in buying photo frames, mounts and specialist paper if you do not regularly sell these. Make sure you understand what clients in your chosen genre regularly request – canvas prints for family portrait shoots for example – and allocate your expenditure accordingly. Targeting stock purchases ensures the greatest return.

5 Outsource production

Contrary to popular opinion printing in-house does not always ensure the greatest quality. While you have more control over the process, external print labs offer exceptional quality results at a far lower per-print price and with less time investment. The same applies to framing and mounting – these activities can significantly erode your shooting and editing time.

6 Maximise throughput

As with any product, the more images you can create the more revenue you can generate. Look for ways to streamline your day-to-day workflow, so that more can be achieved in the time you have available. Photoshop actions and batch processing at the editing stage can be seen as essentials for a professional studio, where many thousands of images must be quality assessed and adjusted. Create actions for each job type, enabling you to fit more assignments into your calendar.

7 Organise your working week

Allocate different assignment types to different days or different times of your normal working day, for a predictable and familiar workflow. Keeping related jobs together allows greater productivity, by minimising travel and reducing the time required for redressing your studio or altering the setup of your equipment. The aim here is to group assignments so that more can be conducted without adding to your staff.

8 Stay connected

While you are away from your studio on assignment, you need to be sure that prospective customers can still contact you with enquiries. Have calls to your studio pushed to your mobile and set up automatic contact services, so that any missed calls trigger a standard text reply to the caller, instructing them to email their details, so you can return their call. This reduces lost revenue through unaddressed enquiries – especially important when working individually.

9. Outsource admin

Master the use of virtual assistants to take care of time-consuming admin tasks

As a small business, you may find that admin occupies a significant amount of your time, which is problematic at peak times when photo-editing requirements increase. Virtual assistants are remote workers that provide office operation support, from answering customer enquiries to organising paperwork and finances. There are multiple options available online, for a range of prices to suit your budget. VAs help you focus on the creative tasks without adding full-time, in-house staff.



Virtual assistants are an affordable solution for outsourcing business tasks that you may not have time to conduct, or any that you are less than confident in managing yourself

10. Cut unprofitable jobs

Not every assignment is worth pursuing. Identify which will benefit your business

While it may seem that, in such a competitive industry, the photographer should chase every available job, you may find that some prove more trouble than their financial return can justify. One-off large assignments, which necessitate additional gear, human resources and time, may promise high pay rates, but once the extra investments are factored in, the overall worth can be significantly lower. Similarly, regular work from the same clients may provide security, but if they require excessive travel and image processing time or studio work, you may find them inhibiting client list growth and progression onto other jobs with better per-hour return.



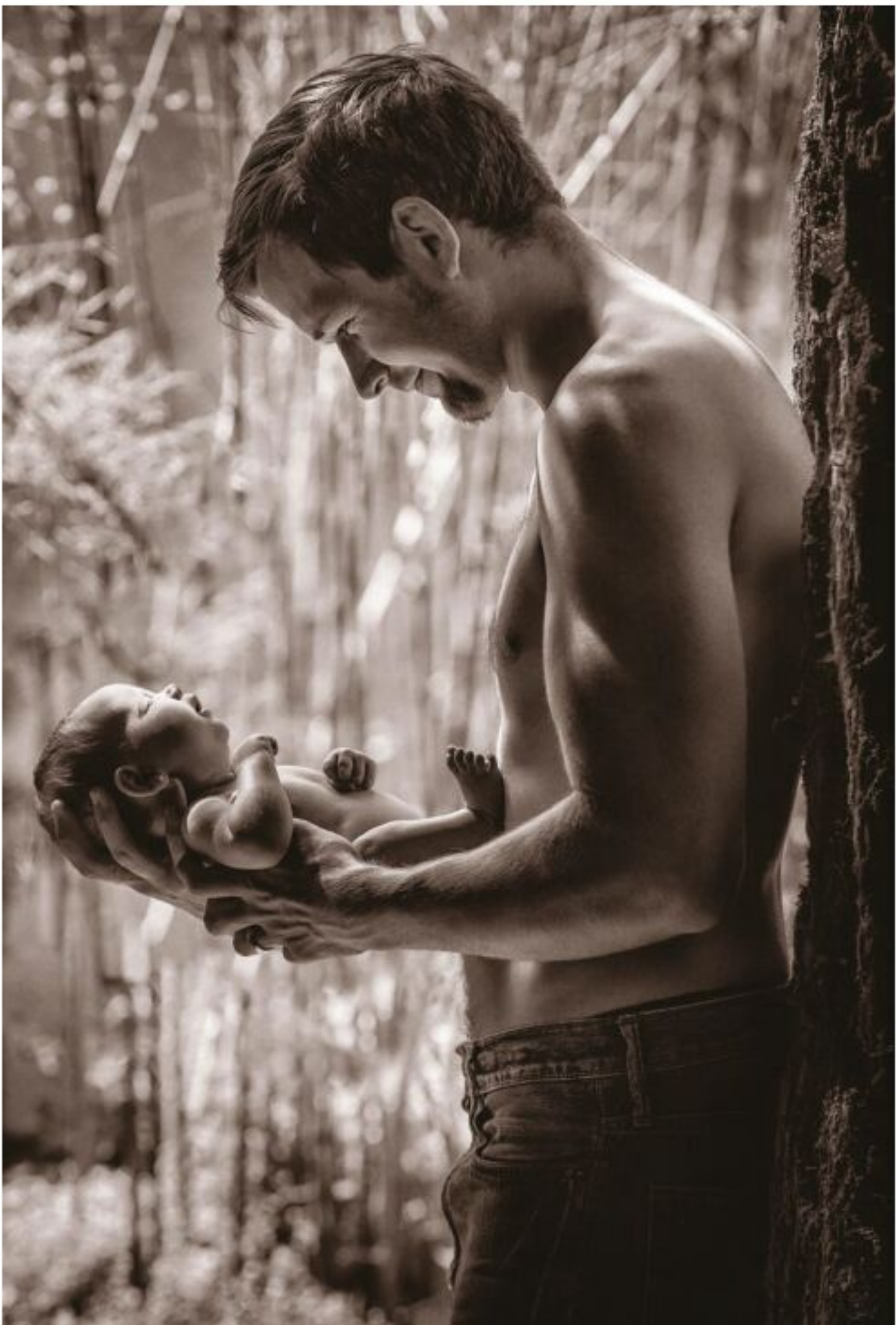
Shoot sequence
Consider rearranging the order of shoots during your working day to see if you can make more use of the available time



Plan your time
Organisation is key – when you have to spend time outside of your studio base, correctly anticipating the necessary time investment is vital for minimising lost revenue

Below left
Define efficiency
Business efficiency does not necessarily refer to photographic processes. While shoots themselves can be made more efficient, these should be seen as fixed activities that should only be altered after general admin improvements

Below
Service and profitability
Any streamlining action you take should be achievable without impacting on the customer experience. Look to remove unnecessary actions or repetition from your workflow before addressing 'front-of-house' opportunities



Pro case study



Paul Wilkinson
(paulwilkinson
photography.
co.uk) explains how
efficiency is the key to
a profitable photo business

Tell us a bit about your career.

I started the photography business in 2005 and went full time in 2008. Before that I worked as an IT consultant, having graduated with a PhD in Computing. I opened my own studio in Haddenham in 2012, which is a wonderfully quirky space, formally an architects' practice. I have a Fellowship with the SWPP and the MPA and have won an array of national and international awards. I now regularly act as an international judge.

What are the greatest challenges of running a studio, regarding efficiency?

A photography business is one big balancing act. You want all of your images to be award-winning and hand-crafted, but to the end client the hours you have spent on the perfect shot are often lost. We only show finished images to our clients but for large images we build in time to double-check it, ensuring it will look amazing when finished. You are balancing quality against rewards and time spent against profit. I have often heard that a photographer's true hourly rate is one of the lowest.

How does inefficiency impact customer experience?

If you are inefficient the most noticeable impact is that everything takes longer than it should. Processing takes longer, customers take longer to see their images and sales are delayed. It is stressful, as you always feel as if you are up against [time]. Try to find ways to standardise the way you work. It is a juggling act but one you need to be in control of.

How do you ensure a financially and time-efficient operation?

We track all of our jobs from start to finish so everyone in the team understands at which stage each job is at. We have standard processes where we all play to our strengths – I am the creative, Sarah runs the studio and Michelle looks after our customers. Our customers always know what to expect and when. Our customer experience is the focus of our business.

Top right Varied focus

Paul conducts a range of assignments, covering many subjects and situations, requiring him to streamline his working process for efficiency

Bottom right Customer experience

Paul crafts his efficiency strategy around his clients' requirements, ensuring a rapid image turnaround and high quality is maintained



Paul's pro tips for an efficient business

- ⚙️ **What are your costs?** Understand your costs and the cost drivers in your business.
- ⚙️ **Manage your cashflow** Cashflow is the biggest killer for small businesses. Always take full payment upfront and plan for when you can see cashflow black spots.
- ⚙️ **Organisation** Be organised or have someone who is organised in your business.
- ⚙️ **Play to your strengths** Understand where you add value and what jobs you can delegate to others.
- ⚙️ **Ensure client satisfaction** Be brave and make the customer experience the focus of your business. Don't compete on price alone.



Building a portfolio

Quality control is an essential step in ensuring clients always see the best of your work – early impressions can secure work in future

All images © Matthew Joseph

QUALITY CONTROL YOUR IMAGE LIBRARY

Self-assessment of our own work is one of the hardest things a photographer has to learn to do

Use 100% zoom

While 'pixel-peeping' is not always a realistic way of assessing image quality, it can often be a beneficial exercise

For commercial purposes, zooming in to 100% magnification in your image archiving software, such as Lightroom, ensures there is a quality buffer between your informed standards and the expectations of the end user. Submitting an image with more resolution than is likely required, or with insignificant visible noise at 100%, can guarantee there is little cause for a picture agency to reject your work. While images may seem harshly judged using these magnifications, employing the highest standards as a reference covers your files for almost any potential usage – especially important if you don't know what the final function will be.

TECHNIQUES

Opposite
**The importance
of content**

Matthew Joseph always excludes the obviously unsuitable images first, but considers the success of the content and atmosphere to be of greater importance than absolute technical perfection

Right
Local quality

Sometimes it is best to assess image success based on key areas of the frame. If the face in a portrait is 'perfect', the shot may still be acceptable, despite any minor flaws elsewhere

Below
The RAW advantage

Like many photographers, Matthew Joseph shoots in RAW format by default, since this offers the greatest opportunity for maintaining quality throughout his shooting and post-production workflow



Ensuring that the images you supply to your customers are of the highest possible quality is a deceptively challenging task. While investing in professional equipment and perfecting your technique will provide more consistent results, shooting files is only one stage of the output process. Sorting an image database and isolating the best photos from a particular shoot is a skill in its own right. The working photographer has to establish that their images are fit for purpose and are aligned with the required functions expected by the client.

The first stage is to determine what the term 'quality' means in any given circumstance. What is desired by one consumer is not necessarily considered of utmost importance by another. While stock agencies aiming for sales to poster and magazine publishers are likely concerned with absolute sharpness and even lighting, a newspaper picture editor may place more

emphasis on subject, context and timing. For a breaking news story, successfully capturing an illustrative image in the right place at the right time is more important than technical perfection. Be sure that you offer your client what they need for their current project by defining the parameters of what makes a successful image, while sorting files for deletion or archiving.

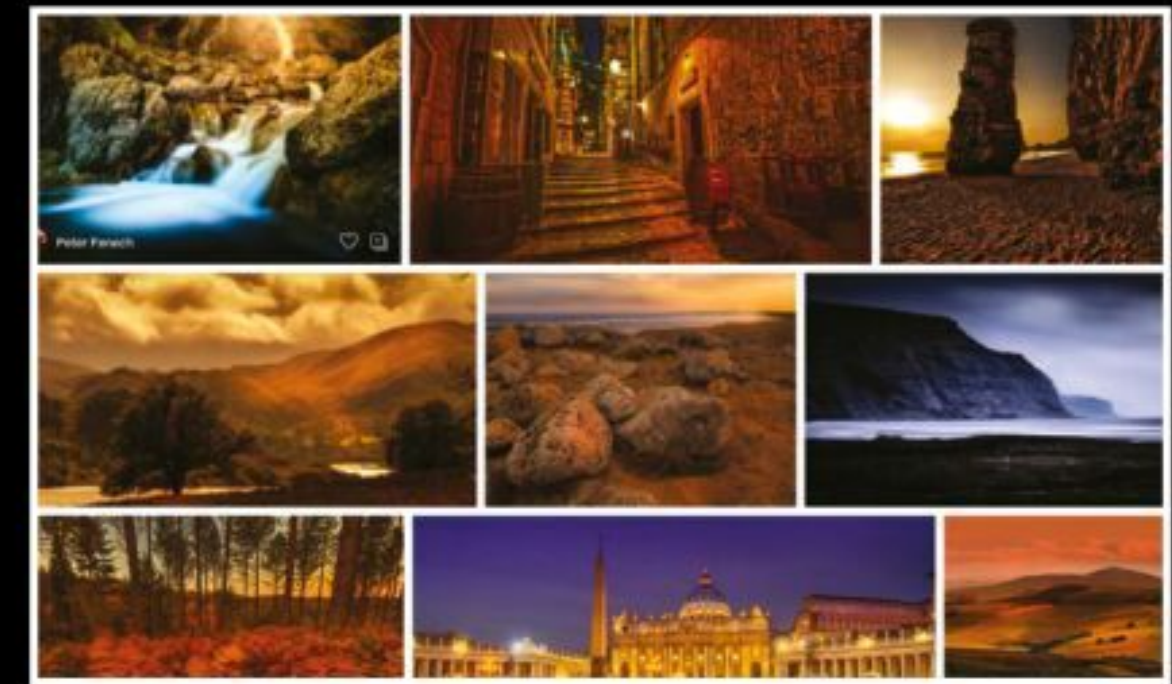
An effective strategy is to pass images through multiple stages of assessment – which allows comparison to similar frames – to make an informed decision about which is the most appropriate. At the initial stage, run through the images in a timeline view in Lightroom or Adobe Bridge, assigning a quick star rating as you go. There is often limited use in applying a scaled rating at this point; a two or three-star label won't indicate a usable image anyway, so a better strategy is to eliminate these files from your library now and avoid a convoluted rating system. Simply star any stand-out images and delete failed

“Offer your client what they need for their current project by defining the parameters of what makes a successful image”

Refresh your portfolio

Periodically reassess your online galleries to give first-time viewers a good impression

Even shots that are not destined for direct sale to a customer, such as those used to advertise your own work, should be reassessed from time to time. As your style changes and your skills improve, refresh your image portfolio to check all compositions are on-brand. Every six months, revisit your homepage and replace shots you no longer want people to see – this is your 'shop window', so only the best possible shots belong here.



While sentimentally significant to you, viewers won't always connect with your images in the same way. If you have to justify its presence, an image has no place in your portfolio



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shots – all other images are worth further scrutiny, or may be useful in the future.

Always make image assessments in a 'clean room' – a space with neutral-coloured walls (mid-tone grey is the best ambient colour) and no direct, undiffused sunlight. This will work around issues relating to colour misrepresentation and exposure discrepancies induced by the vision of the examiner. Always calibrate your monitor in the same room as you intend to analyse and edit your work, to circumvent unexpected colour and brightness shifts. It is also a sensible idea to save multiple edited copies of your images, to give you several file choices later and to increase the chance of you having an image that matches client requests. This may relate to variances in image resolution, sharpness and composition.

Whenever starting out with a new camera, lens or computer monitor, try making test prints on different media to create a reference for future image workflows. When gauging image quality on-screen, use the printed samples to form an idea of how the image will appear to the client. This may help you make a choice between two shortlisted files. For archiving purposes, choose a lossless format such as TIFF to be certain that your quality-assessed files are not altered by compression at the final step. Finally, use a side-by-side view to compare the outputted TIFF to the original RAW, to ascertain if processing has resulted in software-induced noise and banding artefacts.

“Always calibrate your monitor in the same room as you intend to analyse and edit your work”

Left above **Consider context**

Before assessing the files from a shoot, define the characteristics you feel will and won't be desirable to your clients, and use these as a template

Left middle **Remember composition**

The term 'quality' also refers to composition, as well as exposure and sharpness. When presented with multiple image versions, pick the file with the most usable and versatile framing

Left bottom **Resolution matters**

Always provide customers with the largest files you have available, to increase their usability. Matthew Joseph uses the longest pixel dimensions of his files as a reference

Pro case study



Commercial photographer Matthew Joseph (matthewjoseph.co.uk) explains how he sorts the masterpieces from the misfires

For how long have you sold your images commercially?

I first got paid for photography when I was 16, so I started young! I'd say that I really started working consistently with commercial clients about seven years ago.

How do you decide which images from a shoot meet the necessary quality standards for commercial sales?

I like to think that I understand commercial branding, marketing and advertising – I'm always thinking from that point of view. Regarding quality standards, there's no questions really – you get rid of the misfires, focus misses, lighting errors, bad compositions and only ever submit what you'd be happy seeing on the biggest billboard for eternity! Copy space is a big consideration and over the years I've spent a lot of time visualising in 16:9 and thinking about web banners. They must be sharp, the exposure must be good and they must fit the brand and brief.

How do you organise and archive your files for the highest quality?

Always keep RAWs, shoot RAW and edit in RAW. After retouching, these are exported as TIFFs and I judge size on pixel width of the longest edge, which changes between DSLR and medium format. Clients receive high-res JPEGs, but in reality, medium-res is more than ample for most applications these days. I then resize those JPEGs into another low-res format, which will be for my application – sending to people, mood boards, blogs, websites, social media etc. Always remain non-destructive as much as possible!

How would you define your photographic style?

I call myself a people-based advertising photographer and whatever I'm shooting, it's mainly about putting people at the centre of everything. People say my work has a 'sheen' or 'gloss' to it, which is quite different to the more raw and gritty approach that a lot of UK photographers go for. Colour is very important to me and I don't tend to shy away from bold palettes.



Matthew Joseph's top tips for commercial success

- 🔗 Ask 'so what?' to every one of your images. If it doesn't move you, then why is it there?
- 🔗 Learn how to separate emotional attachment to an image, from whether it actually says something to others or answers the brief.
- 🔗 Consider your colour palette – is it consistent and does it flow? This is always a work in progress with me.
- 🔗 Keep file structure neat and tidy. Build a system and stick to it to try and future proof as much as possible.
- 🔗 Less is more. Tell a story and leave some mystery (yes, even if you absolutely love the sharpness and bokeh in that shot!).

Above top Perfect for purpose

As a commercial photographer, Matthew must produce images for a wide range of purposes and client bases, making it essential for him to ensure reliable image quality

Above A clear vision

Commencing a shoot with a clear concept in mind helps to speed up quality-control work, since you know what aspects to look for from the start

COLLABORATE BEHIND THE CAMERA

Discover how to put together a winning team

As an artistic endeavour, photography is similar to writing or painting in the sense that people often prefer to create an image by themselves, and photographers tend to be fiercely proud and protective of their work.

Despite this, photographers are always curious about the techniques, locations and equipment employed by other photographers, often hoping to develop a new skill, or even mimic a certain composition. The popularity of photographic workshops is testament to this.

With this in mind, you might wonder why photographers don't actually work together more often. From a commercial point of view, working alone can be inherently limiting. Despite what we like to think, no photographer can be brilliant at everything, and there are some situations when it's

simply more convenient to have someone around who is able to assist you on a tricky shoot, or come up with a creative concept when your own ideas are running dry.

There are many different ways in which photographers can collaborate – from sharing a studio space through to running tours and workshops together, and of course even establishing a business together.

"Sharing your vision with another photographer is a great way to re-examine your work and broaden some horizons," reveals Ewen Bell (ewenbell.com).

"The hardest thing for me as a freelance photographer is the lack of structure to my career, so being part of anything larger than myself is a plus."

Of course, there needs to be some sort of shared vision – though this doesn't have to only apply to photographic matters.

All images
Workshop wonders
 Photo tours and workshops provide a golden opportunity for collaboration with other photographers who can provide different perspectives and skill sets
 © Ewen Bell



It might be that you and another photographer both wish to run workshops in a certain location, and your different specialisms enable you to cater to a broader range of clients, for example.

"Many of the fundamentals are shared, even if your final aesthetics are divergent," says Bell. "Certainly on a photo tour it's a genuine treat to travel with another lead photographer who brings a unique vision to a place you have travelled a lot before. My photographic style centres on how to work with light. I put interesting light above an interesting subject any day, so it's a joy to travel with other photographers who share that understanding. My collaborators for tours are typically people who are enthralled by light as I am, although often it may be a different light we each seek or a different rendering of the same light. A pleasure shared is a pleasure doubled,

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and the act of exploring a culture or landscape is in itself the real joy regardless of what your creative vision is behind the camera."

Clearly though, a personal connection of some kind has to be there, as Bell explains. "I only work with people I like. If we can't be friends, then I don't want to be tied into a business relationship. Trust is absolutely critical. Life is too short to spend your working life with people you don't respect or enjoy [the company of]. There's a lot of ways to make a living from photography, but it's the people you spend time with that makes it worthwhile. I started working with a very talented food stylist and photographer in 2013, and we found that we could do a 16-hour shoot and still enjoy each other's company. I liked her so much that I married her! Don't believe anyone if they tell you to never work with friends – I say never work with people who aren't your friends."

Equally, when you are not connecting well with someone on a personal level, working with them professionally is likely to be a somewhat frustrating exercise. "Sometimes it's clear that there's a fundamental difference in how you work, in which case it's better to wind things up and take separate paths," explains Bell. "You can work with people from very different influences and styles without a problem, but if you can't be good friends then you won't be good collaborators. I've worked with many talented and well-meaning people whose personality just grates on me and presses my buttons the wrong way. They may not be terrible people, it's just that we didn't click the right way."

Occasionally, a difference in approach might make further collaboration unworkable, particularly if it involves ethics or etiquette. "I recently travelled with a photographer who was simply too aggressive in his approach to shooting people, and it was contrary to what I teach on the tours, so that was a problem. His style was gorgeous, however, and everyone on the trip loved seeing his vision, [but] talent alone is not enough. Leading a photo tour means you are in a position of responsibility, so respect for locals is not negotiable."

That said, many potential problems can be relatively easily sorted out. "[Disputes] are rarely anything more than a misunderstanding, so all it takes is a calm head and being ready to delve into what happened to understand where the problem arose," explains Bell. "We all make mistakes, it just comes down to good communication and listening to what someone is trying to explain to you. Ignoring a tension is a bad idea. Clearing the air and being honest, and listening with honest intent, removes small problems before they become big ones."



Above Teamwork

Collaborating on bigger projects can be a great way of ensuring efficiency, provided you're able to work together effectively

© Double Exposure
Photographic

Pro case study



William Paltridge from Double Exposure Photographic on why collaboration has been so good for business

What are the possible reasons for photographers to collaborate?

It isn't typical for photographers to collaborate, in fact, it can be quite a solitary practice. That said, there are occasions when more than one photographer comes together on a project. Within the commercial advertising sector it might be that another photographer offers the opportunity to capture different angles of the same shoot, or a different format camera for a unique look and feel. It could be that a photographer works on location in another studio, or area, and leans on a local professional who can assist with resources and knowledge. It's much more common for a photographer to partner with an assistant, art director and stylist, though.

How can potential collaborators be identified?

It does depend on the assignment as to whether a potential collaborator is the right approach. If you are working away from your local area or own studio, then an online search for a local photographer or studio in the area you're travelling to would be a good move. Getting advance knowledge of locations and facilities is always handy. There are various online platforms to facilitate this, too – often a quick online post to Facebook, Twitter or a members group might identify a fellow professional with the right skill set.

What are the pitfalls to be aware of prior to collaborating?

Aside from the obvious conflict of interest and not wanting to give away all your secrets, the main thing is a case of too many cooks spoiling the broth. It's not very common to have two similar-thinking creatives on the same project, as it can lead to a conflict in leadership. It's a good idea to know in advance how another photographer can help specifically, and to identify those roles early on. Sticking to a plan will avoid confusion.

How do you ensure a successful partnership with even distribution of work and responsibility, etc?

This comes down to planning. From a personal point of view, even if both photographers have a similar skill set, it is often useful to adopt the roles of photographer and assistant. Allowing one photographer to manage shooting and the other lighting is a good start. If both attempt to run a shoot it's a recipe for trouble. Be clear on each person's role and stick to that.

How can disputes and disagreements best be avoided or dealt with?

Creative differences can lead to problem solving, but if not dealt with professionally may lead to awkward moments in front of the client. It's best to be clear before the shoot of the roles you'll each take, and the overall direction of the project including key deliverables. Discrete conversation and quick positive decision making is essential.

What sort of projects/endeavours are especially good for photographers to collaborate on?

Trips abroad or into locations that are unknown could benefit from local knowledge – this is important potentially for documentary and landscape. From a studio point of view, having good contacts in other studios is ideal. These relationships can be built up over time, and can come to be very important. Relying on a good contact to be able to help you out is no bad thing. It might be that you don't have the full skill set for a certain project, or are booked up – offering a valued client to another photographer can avoid disappointment and maintain relationships.

How important is it to get on personally with a collaborator?

Any collaboration relies on professional attitudes and similar personalities; it's never easy working with someone who's not on the same wavelength. This can't be taught; it's an experience thing. The more both parties understand each other's workflows, creative perspectives and skill sets, the better.

Do you need to shoot in a similar style or have a similar eye?

No. On most occasions projects will benefit from personalities and skill sets that enhance and support each other. That said, it can't hurt to have a similar eye; when two professionals agree that a shot needs 'extra light', or a product needs 'just a tiny rotation', it's a sign you're both firing on all cylinders.

“Any collaboration relies on professional attitudes and similar personalities”



SWITCH YOUR FOCUS GENRE

Learn to successfully take on new challenges by rebooting your business specialisms while minimising risk

It is difficult for a photographer to become so established in a photographic genre that their business is entirely supported by the creation of a single type of image. Many working pros dream of being able to solely shoot weddings, portraits or, even more rarely, sports, landscape or wildlife images. Therefore it comes as no surprise that the decision to change genre, once already supported by an existing client base, is not an easy one to make. A photographer may choose to switch the focus of their business due to market demands – while historically there may have been a strong demand for a certain type of photography, changes in the economy and social expectation can rapidly diminish custom. Examples of this are wedding and portrait photography – many members of

the public are now content with images made on smartphones or entry-level DSLRs, notably diluting demand for high-street wedding photography. Alternatively, new opportunities may present themselves in emerging markets, making it more profitable to adjust the promoted specialism of your services.

The core challenges of pursuing such a shift are varied and profound however. When trying to advertise your work in the new genre, you encounter the same complications as any start-up business, including a lack of customer awareness and perceived expertise. This is accompanied by a reversal in the benefit of your brand identity – while this used to be an asset in promoting your proficiency in a chosen field, it may now act to disrupt the formation of

Website strategy

Direct potential customers to your preferred online presence

When looking to make the public aware of your shift in specialism, it is vital to convey this information clearly. While adding a section to an existing website may garner some attention, it is advisable to set up a separate site that only features your new image type. Giving the impression that your business covers multiple fields may suggest you are diverse, but many clients will want to see an obvious focus. Many pros maintain multiple sites for each genre.

TECHNIQUES

a new list of loyal clients. This may be due to public perception of your specialisms or search engine functionality, both of which can result in potential customers overlooking your availability. Furthermore there are issues relating to a lack of materials, incorporating cameras, lenses, genre-specific accessories and printing requirements.

Potential solutions can be sought in adaptability and advanced preparation. A first consideration should be how to migrate your existing client base. Think carefully about which of your regular return customers may have requirements compatible with your new business model and inform them of your new focus. Start this process early – once you have decided to make adjustments to your business, immediately think about advertising and use newsletters or email marketing to build awareness. The key concept is to make your transition gradual – leave yourself plenty of time to alter the presentation of your brand, using current assignments to inform people of planned changes. Use new business cards alongside current ones to make the shift seem more organic.

The end goal should be to encourage a flow of business from two sources – front-of-house clients, who are first-time users of your services and also pre-existing customers, whom you have brought with you from previous assignments. The former will likely take longer to establish, as with all new businesses, so work on the latter in advance of conducting your first jobs. Unless you intend to operate a multi-genre business, which is a substantially different strategy, try to minimise the duration of overlap between shoot types. This is an essential consideration, since attempting to shoot many different subjects requires a greater range of equipment and time allocation (see 'Commit for efficiency' boxout).

Ultimately your success at changing business type depends on the timing and efficient execution of the process.

Right top

Opposing genres

Moving from the shooting of stationary objects to mobile and erratic subjects provides the greatest challenges, due to equipment limitations and contradictory techniques

Right middle

Creative motivation

Many photography assignments can become formulaic over time. A switch of genres can provide the opportunity for new challenges and in turn, artistic experimentation



Commit for efficiency

Facilitate a smooth transition between business types by streamlining the process and ensure long-term viability

Once you have chosen to switch genres and are confident that the new target market is stable, you may find it more sustainable to make the change absolute. Fully invest in your new core subject by selling gear that is now likely to be rarely used, to pay for more applicable items. Rearrange your studio accordingly, or abandon a physical studio space altogether if you feel it will no longer be of benefit.



Avoid bridging genres unnecessarily to reduce overheads and fixed costs caused by accumulating equipment and other unused assets. This is especially important when moving between greatly different areas of photography

Pro case study



Jake Moore (jakemoorephotography.com) explains how he successfully balanced life shooting two very contrasting genres – wedding and water sports photography

Tell us a bit about your photographic career to date. What got you started?

In 2006, my cousin said he was getting married and having spent all his money so far, he asked me to shoot his wedding as I “had a camera.” I said I had only photographed the odd sunset before but he didn’t care – his wedding debt was growing so I worryingly obliged. I ended up loving his wedding so much and he still talks of his photos from the day 12 years later. I then used these photos

“I had to manage my time, as one genre was going to be for money and the other was for my heart”

as a portfolio, got my first ever paid wedding and never looked back.

What did you find most difficult about bridging genres? What were the core challenges?

For me, the toughest moment was realising that no one wanted to pay for their surfing photos. I first tried to sell them pictures of themselves but made about a tenner over a few very cold months. I had once thought that if I could now master water photography, I would be in Hawaii six months a year, living in a beach resort and never looking back. The thing is, surfers don’t have the cash for their

shots and the magazines were dwindling around the UK. I needed to burn the bridge and realise only one [genre] was going to pay the mortgage.

How did you overcome these difficulties?

I had to realise that these two genres are very different. One could pay £1,500 a day and the other rarely got me a hot cup of coffee. I must admit my water camera has given me some ‘money can’t buy’ experiences, but these don’t put food on the table. I had to manage my time, as one genre was going to be consistently for money and the other was for my heart.



Taking on a new genre – Jake’s top tips

- 🌀 **Scope out the competition** Check out how overcrowded the new genre is. Luckily for me, no one was really touching water sports. I’m one of about five people around the world that do both weddings and water sports.
- 🌀 **Try it out first** Practise the genre you are moving into and test it to see if there is money there first, unless of course you are doing it for the love of it.
- 🌀 **Consider SEO** Don’t underestimate the power of Search Engine Optimisation. Google will penalise you for changing tack. Having two websites is also tough and your second will never be as high up as your more established site.
- 🌀 **Manage separate social media pages** Set up new social media accounts rather than mixing styles. Most people don’t understand when I say I shoot two genres. Most people will only like one of the two that you shoot.

Above left Fast action

Jake’s specialism in surfing photography necessitates a collection of niche gear, such as waterproof housing, which may find limited use in other genres. This type of situation can be financially challenging

Above right Quiet moments

Jake has to approach his wedding subjects with a different mindset. When switching genres, be sure you have the appropriate technical skill accompanied by the necessary subject knowledge

BECOME A BRAND AMBASSADOR

Discover how to work in partnership with a well-known brand

Consistency

When presenting yourself and your work online, make sure that you create a consistent body of work that positively represents you and your style

All images © Amy Shore

Gaining sponsorship from a big brand is a sign of really 'making' it for many photographers. However, it is very important that this partnership becomes a two-way relationship that both parties will be able to benefit from.

The biggest thing that will sell you as an asset to the brand is the ability to create killer content and have a solid presence online. It's so important that you find your niche, something that makes you stand out. Be unique, but most importantly be consistent.

Amy Shore became a brand ambassador for Nikon in 2017. She says, "On my birthday, I got a phone call from Nikon asking me if I wanted to be an ambassador. They said that they'd been following my work for some time and after I wrote a huge blog post called 'The Giant How To of Car Photography', they said they liked my honest attitude towards giving advice and helping others which prompted them to contact me. I was totally

overwhelmed and flattered." This shows just how important a strong online presence is for photographers looking for sponsorship, as well as having unique content.

Being sponsored by a brand does mean you will have to have the ability and drive to commit time to promoting and furthering the brand themselves. However, Shore explains, "It's not particularly time-consuming, or at least it doesn't feel that way because everything I ever get asked to be involved with is always fun! I spoke for three days at The Photography Show on the Nikon stage and have done a couple of 'Coffee, Cakes and Cameras' mornings which are very relaxed. I've also just completed my first #NikonMeetUps which involved me teaching a group of 30 delegates how to photograph different aspects of cars which was great to show a little insight into my world."

Shore was lucky in that she was very interested in the Nikon brand before they

Create a consistent portfolio

Make your imagery stand out by finding your own personal style

You can develop a personal style based on elements such as your subject matter, your lighting style, shooting angle and even the way you edit your images. For example, you may prefer cooler tones over warm ones or vice versa and edit accordingly. Don't try and imitate anyone else, find a style that works for you and stick with it. This will make your online portfolio more memorable; Amy Shore's niche in car photography enabled her work to be noticed by Nikon.



Above
Misty Revival Morning

Find a style and stick with it, in order to make your work noticeably yours

Left
The Seafarer

Learn to sell yourself and show the brand exactly what you can offer them

approached her. “I have only ever shot on Nikon cameras since my first DSLR when I was 16 years old, which was a Nikon D50! They’re a brand I love and now feel so used to in terms of interface, usage and editing that I don’t think I’d ever be able to change.”

She says that the best thing about being an ambassador is the exclusive access to kit. “Getting my hands on the new D850 was awesome, and being able to borrow kit for shoots is so helpful. But also, it’s really awesome to be able to thank those at Nikon for everything they do for the brand and their customers like me.”

Be a successful brand ambassador

Five tips for presenting your work online and ensuring a successful relationship with the brand

- 🔗 **Learn to sell yourself** A brand will be looking for someone who best represents its values and personality – you need to let the brand know what makes you a good fit, and once they select you ensure this shows in the work that you produce.
- 🔗 **Build followers** It is important that as you begin building followers online that you both engage with them as a whole and individually. Don’t ignore someone if they pay your work a compliment, respond as it will show that you are open and available.
- 🔗 **Create a consistent body of work** Make sure every image and blog you post out online depicts you in the best possible way. Having a clear style is important as it will mean your content is more memorable.
- 🔗 **Understand what is expected** Get to know exactly what the brand you represent want. Your relationship is essentially a business deal. They will expect to get a return from your relationship, whether it is an increase in sales or just an increase in visibility.
- 🔗 **Always be professional** Never post drunken Saturday night pictures of yourself on any of your work accounts. Your online self should represent you and your values in the best possible way – and should complement the values of the brand you represent. Never be rude to your followers.



Pro case study



Nikon brand ambassador Amy Shore shares how being affiliated with a brand has changed the way she works

“It gives me more credibility to those who don’t know my work, whether it’s other photographers or potential clients”

Does being a brand ambassador help your business?

Definitely. I mean, how cool does ‘Amy Shore: Nikon UK Ambassador’ sound? It’s honestly a dream come true, it’s truly something I never, ever, ever expected to be able to say. It gives me more credibility to those who don’t know my work, whether it’s other photographers or potential clients.

Do you think you get more clients?

That’s a tough one... I’m not sure. I’m now fairly well known in the automotive world for my type of photography, but I do feel like I’ve been extra booked up since the beginning of my partnership with Nikon.

Has it created any unique experiences/opportunities for you as a professional?

Yes! Until The Photography Show, I’d never spoken on stage to anyone before. That was

a whole new experience, I really enjoyed it! To be asked so many questions from newer photographers is a new and cool experience too. Up until now (and still!) it’s been me asking other photographers for help, tips and advice, not the other way around!

Has it changed the way you work?

I suppose it’s made me more confident. Photographers can be prone to self criticism, and it can be so hard to like your own work or to see worth. To have one of the biggest camera companies in the world recognise me and my work – well, it’s a compliment, to say the least!

Above Unique angles

Having something you can offer both the brand and the customer is essential

Right The Hunt for Croissants

Build followers and create content that engages them



SHOOTING SKILLS

158. CAPTURE MOTION IN A SCENE

164. SHOOT A CHARACTER PORTRAIT

**170. SHOOT CREATIVE PORTRAITS
WITH NEON LIGHTS**

176. SHOOT CREATIVE NEWBORN PORTRAITS

182. CREATE A WET PLATE PORTRAIT

188. TURN ROCK INTO ART



CAPTURE MOTION IN A SCENE

Experiment with slow shutter speeds and
use subject movement for creative effect



When did you last take a photograph where some, or all, of your subject was blurred? The reason we ask is because nothing divides opinion among photographers like blur. Some love it, but others hate it and will go to great lengths to make sure that every shot they take – and everything in those shots – is absolutely tack sharp, using fast lenses, sturdy tripods and high shutter speeds to freeze everything. However, as this tutorial demonstrates, by allowing moving elements in a scene to blur, instead of always stopping them dead, you can capture a truly wonderful sense of motion in your images that adds atmosphere and

interest. There is no single way to achieve the desired effect, so experimentation is usually required.

The two main factors are how fast your subject is moving, and the shutter speed you use to photograph it – the faster the movement and the slower the shutter speed, the more motion you'll record. Those shutter speeds will be dictated by light levels, lens aperture and ISO, and if required, neutral density filters can be used to slow the shutter speed down even more.

To give you an idea of what can be achieved, we photographed a classic Venetian scene at dawn that includes both static and moving elements.

Above

Gondolas at dawn, Venice, Italy

For the final image, an exposure of 50 seconds was used to capture lots of motion in the bobbing gondolas so they contrast well with the static elements in the scene. The water in the foreground has also been smoothed out nicely

All images © Lee Frost

What you'll need

- 📷 Camera
- 📷 Lens
- 📷 Tripod
- 📷 Remote release
- 📷 Filter holder
- 📷 ND grad filters

Shooting steps

1 Set up your equipment Mount your camera on a tripod and compose the scene. Focus the lens and take a test shot to check the exposure is okay and if you need to use any filters. In this case a 0.9 'hard' ND grad was needed to balance the sky and foreground.

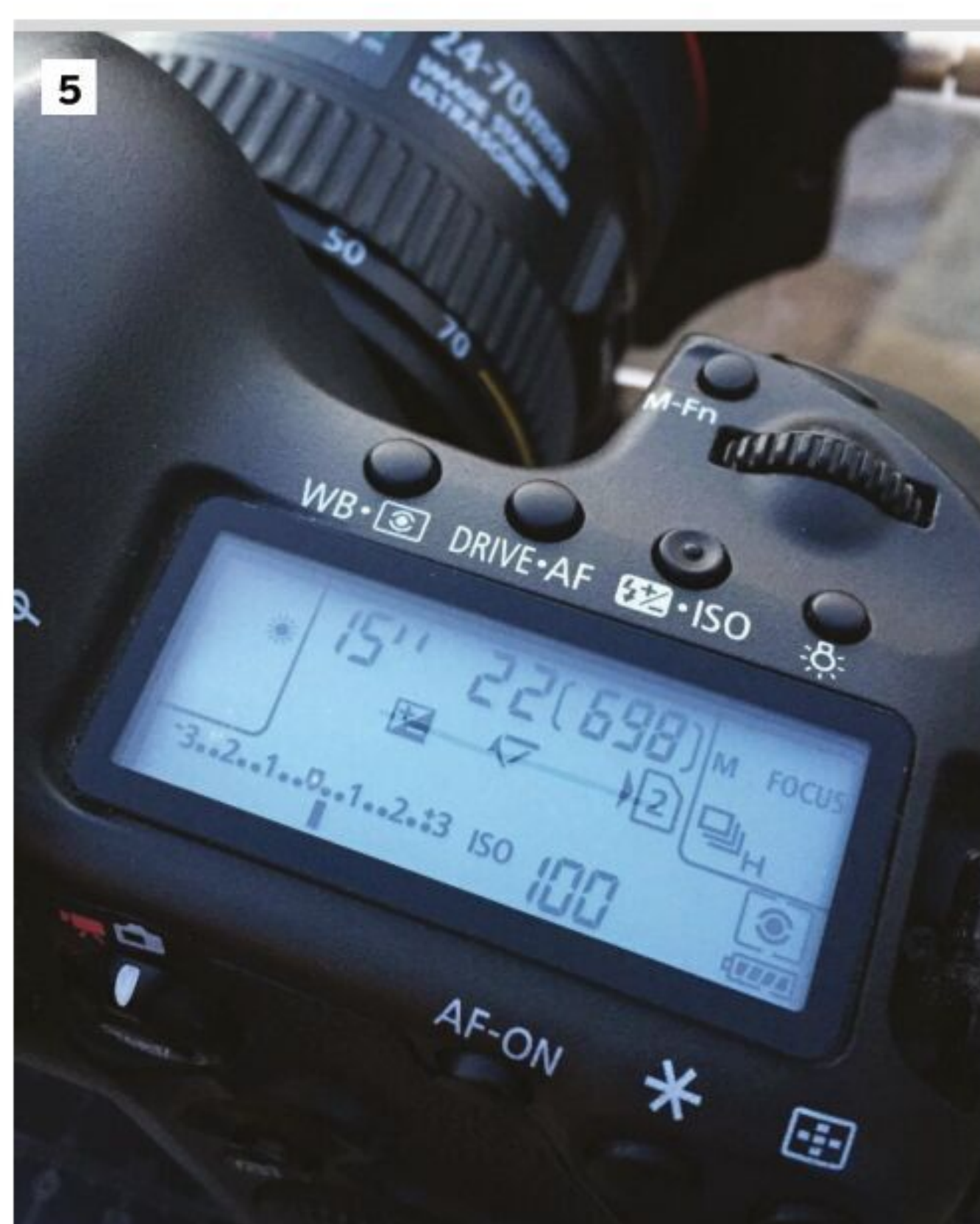
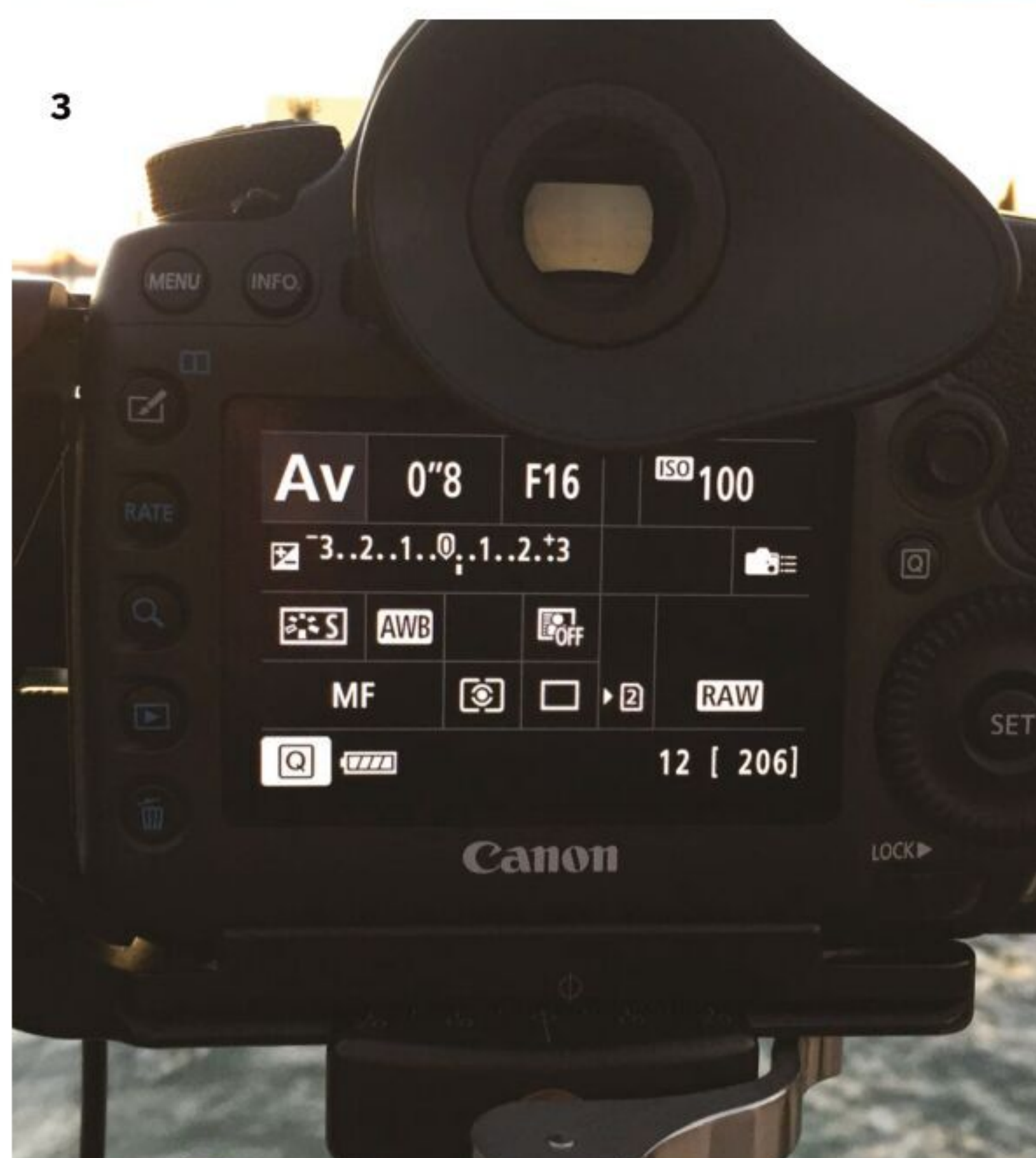
2 Assess the shot The initial shot looks fine in terms of composition and exposure. The ND grad filter has balanced the bright dawn sky with the darker foreground and the image is sharp from front to back. The only problem is no motion has been recorded, so a slower shutter speed must be used.

3 Slow down the shutter speed To record more motion in the scene, you need a slower shutter speed. To achieve this, use a low ISO and stop the lens down to a small aperture – in this case ISO 100 and f16. If light levels are naturally low, doing this may give you the desired speed.

4 Motion blur Here you can see that the gondolas in the foreground are definitely blurred now because they were moving up and down during the 0.8sec exposure. For some photographers this would be enough motion, but it's worth experimenting with even longer exposures to see if the effect can be improved.

5 Use a neutral density filter If your lens is stopped right down to its smallest aperture, the ISO is at its lowest setting and you're still not recording enough motion, your next step is to use an ND filter. In this case, a 1.2 ND filter was used to reduce the exposure by four stops.

6 Mission accomplished By using an ND filter, the exposure was increased to 15 seconds at f22 and ISO 100. Motion in the gondolas is very pronounced now and looks really effective. Even the texture in the moving water has been reduced and the reflections of the gondolas are smoothed out.



The setup

SCENE SELECTION

A scene was chosen that contains both moving and static elements – without movement you can't capture motion

TIME OF DAY

The scene was photographed at dawn when light levels were naturally low, allowing slow shutter speeds to be used to record motion

COMPOSITION

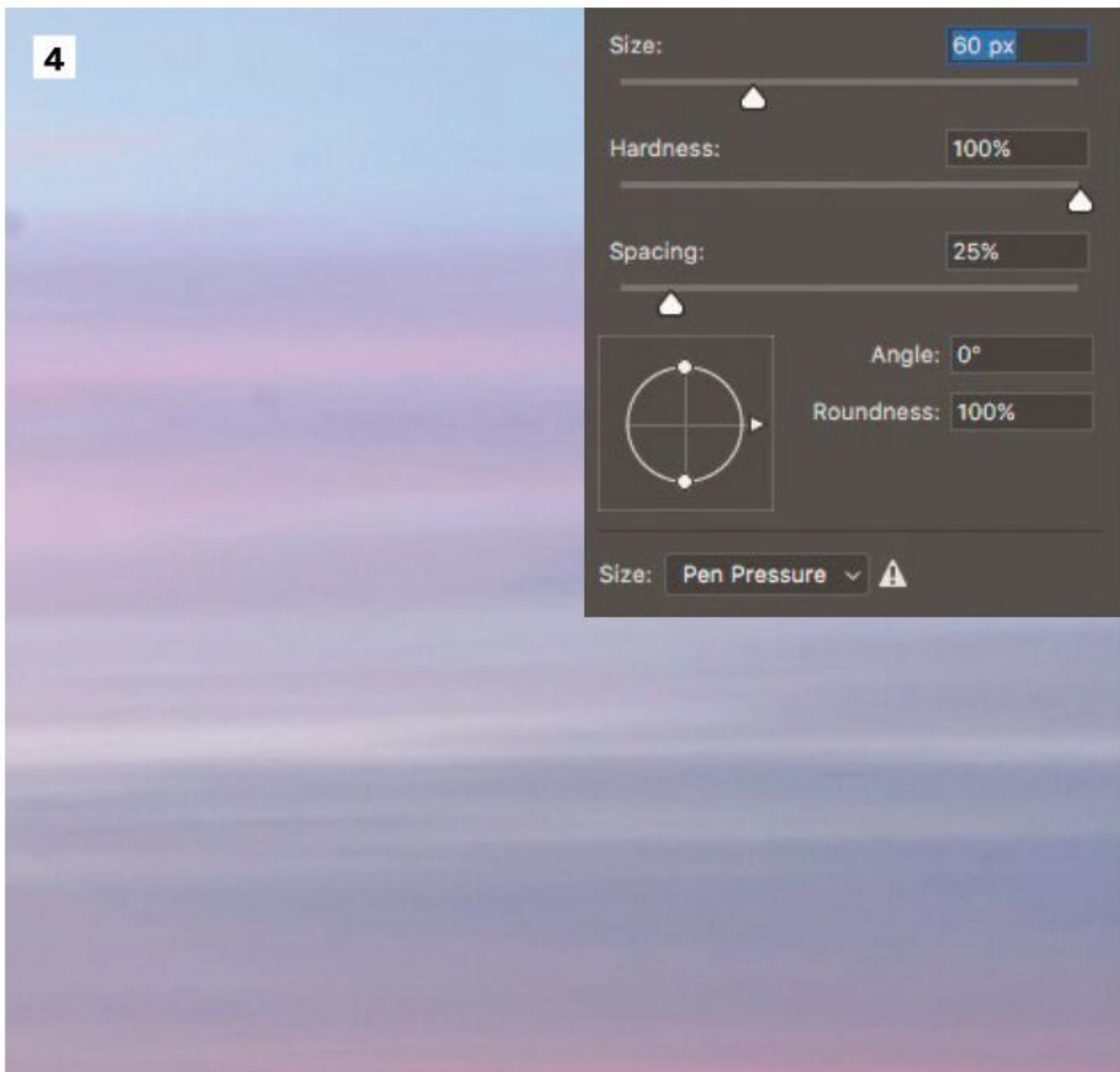
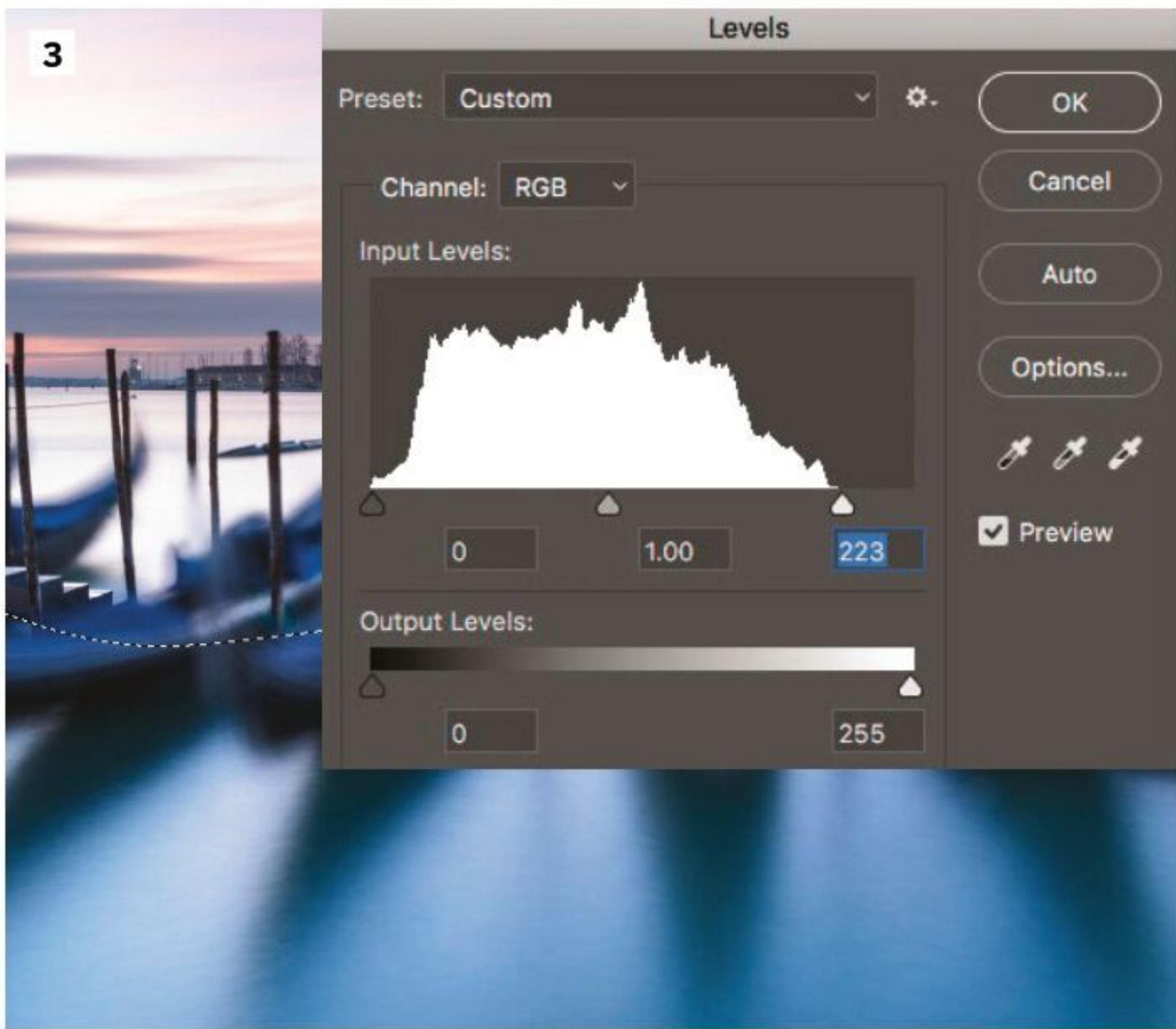
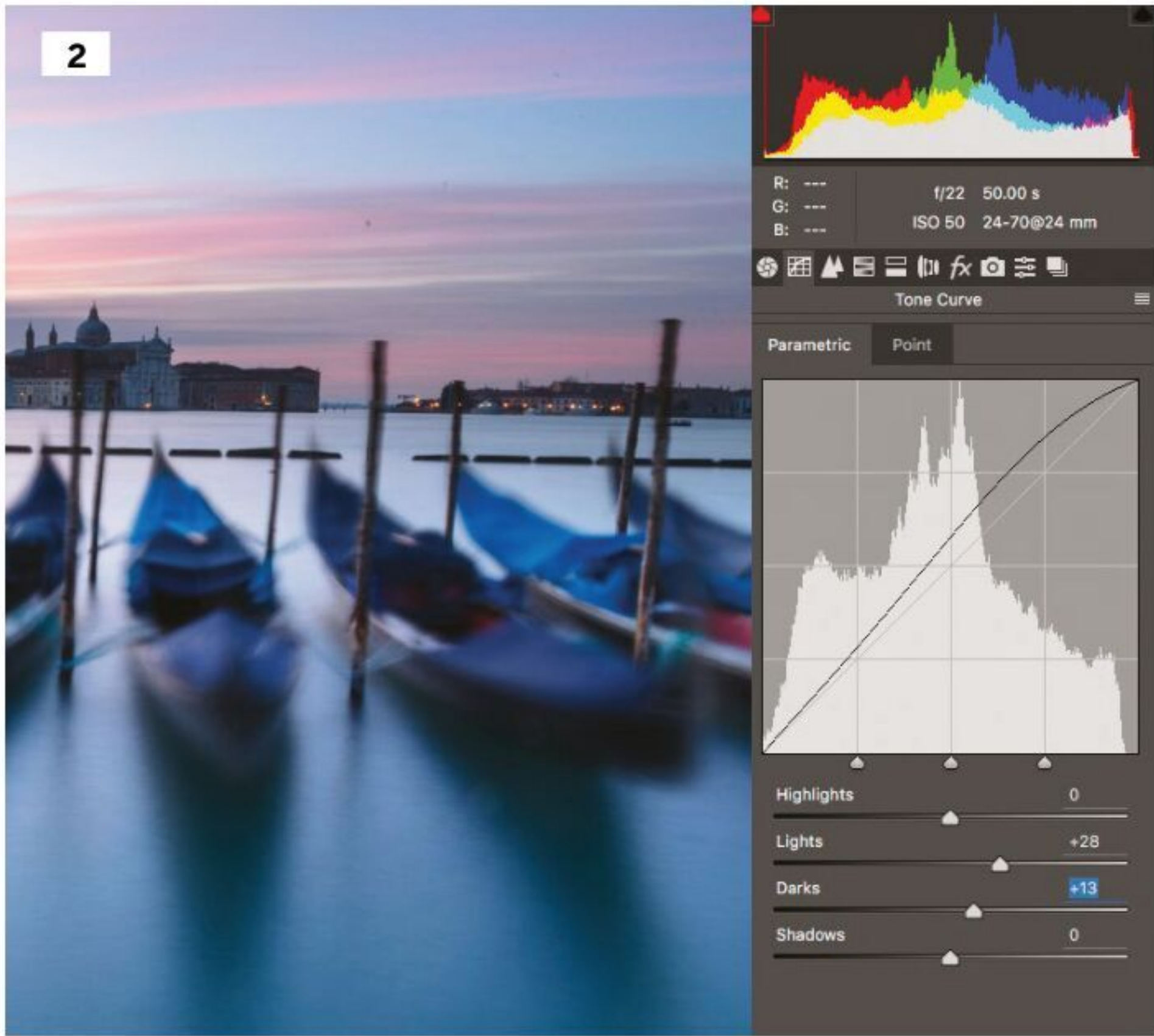
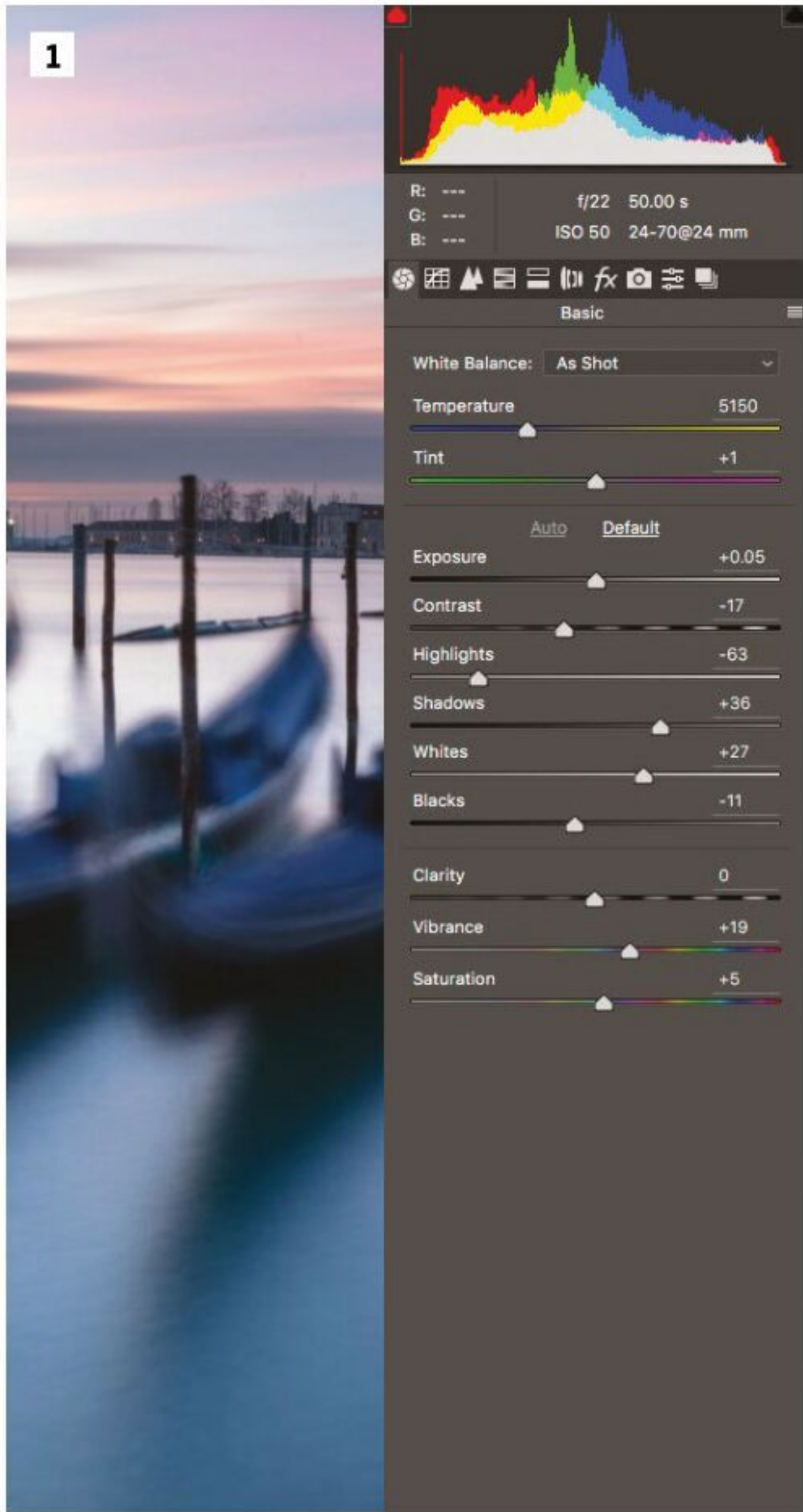
The camera was set up close to the gondolas so they filled the foreground, and the scene was carefully composed using a 24-70mm zoom

Take it to the max

If you want to maximise motion, use an extreme ND filter

Once you start experimenting with capturing motion, don't be surprised if a) you get hooked on the technique and b) you want to take the effect much further. To do that, you'll need to arm yourself with an 'extreme' neutral density filter. A ten-stop ND is the most popular and probably the most versatile for general use, though weaker six-stop and stronger 15-stop NDs are also available from manufacturers such as Lee Filters and Hitech. With a ten-stop ND filter exposures are increased by 1,000x, so you can leave your shutter open for several minutes in broad daylight and literally capture the passing of time. Drifting clouds record as delicate streaks, moving water turns to milk and the effect can look stunning.





Editing steps

1 Open the RAW file Open the original RAW file in Adobe Camera Raw in Photoshop CC 2018. Apply Lens Corrections and select the Auto option under the Basic menu. This makes a big improvement to the look and feel of the image.

2 Make more adjustments The shot is still a little dull and dark so while still in ACR, increase Clarity by 10%, select the Tone Curve tab and then increase the Lights and Darks sliders to brighten the image.

3 Level and refine Open the image in Photoshop CC 2018. The horizon is a little wonky so level it then crop. The bottom section of the image is still too dark, so select this area using the Lasso tool and adjust Levels.

4 Final tweaks We also need to brighten the darker areas of the sky by selecting them with the Lasso tool and adjusting Levels. Finally, enlarge the image on screen and remove sensor blemishes with the Healing Brush.

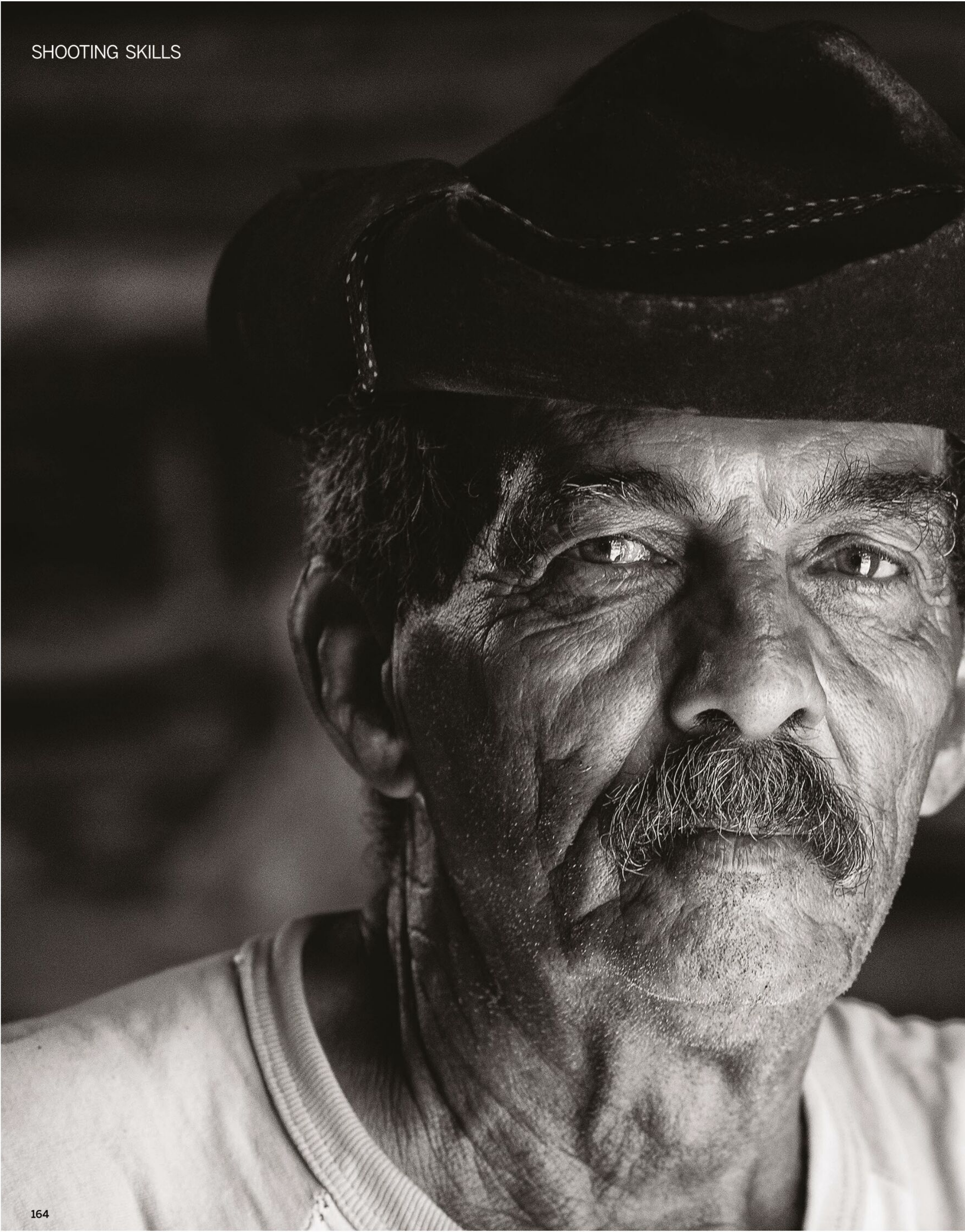
AFTER

BEFORE



Creative blur

If you aim to get the shot as close to finished in-camera, the RAW file will only need minimal editing to create the final image



SHOOT A CHARACTER PORTRAIT

Use natural settings and daylight to create simple but powerful studies

Portrait photography is one of the most accessible and photographic subjects – after all, we encounter people almost every day of our lives, at home, at work, walking down the street or during our travels. The most powerful and compelling portraits also tend to be the simplest, so there's no need for exotic equipment, fancy lighting or in-depth technical knowledge.

In this tutorial you will learn how to shoot successful black and white character portraits in a natural setting, using daylight as the main source of illumination. The subject here is a Cuban tobacco farmer. To produce a great character

portrait you need a subject with character. Old people are ideal as they have a lifetime etched into every line and wrinkle on their face. People who work outdoors also tend to have more characterful faces because they spend so much time in the elements – farmers and fishermen are good examples. The key to success with portrait photography is taking control over the situation rather than letting it control you. Keep the background and lighting simple so you can concentrate on engaging with your sitter, to ensure that the final image does much more than capture a physical likeness – it reaches into their soul.

Left

Tobacco farmer, Vinales, Cuba

The final image is a very powerful and compelling portrait. Strong eye contact makes a big difference as it allows you to engage with the subject, while bold lighting reveals character in his face

All images © Lee Frost

What you'll need

- Camera
- Lens
- Lens hood
- Tripod (optional)
- Plain background
- Natural daylight
- Characterful subject

Shooting steps

1 Select camera settings Auto white balance, single-shot AF and multi-zone metering were selected. We set aperture priority exposure mode, plus a wide lens aperture to reduce depth of field and make sure the background was thrown out of focus. As light levels were low, the ISO was increased to 1600.

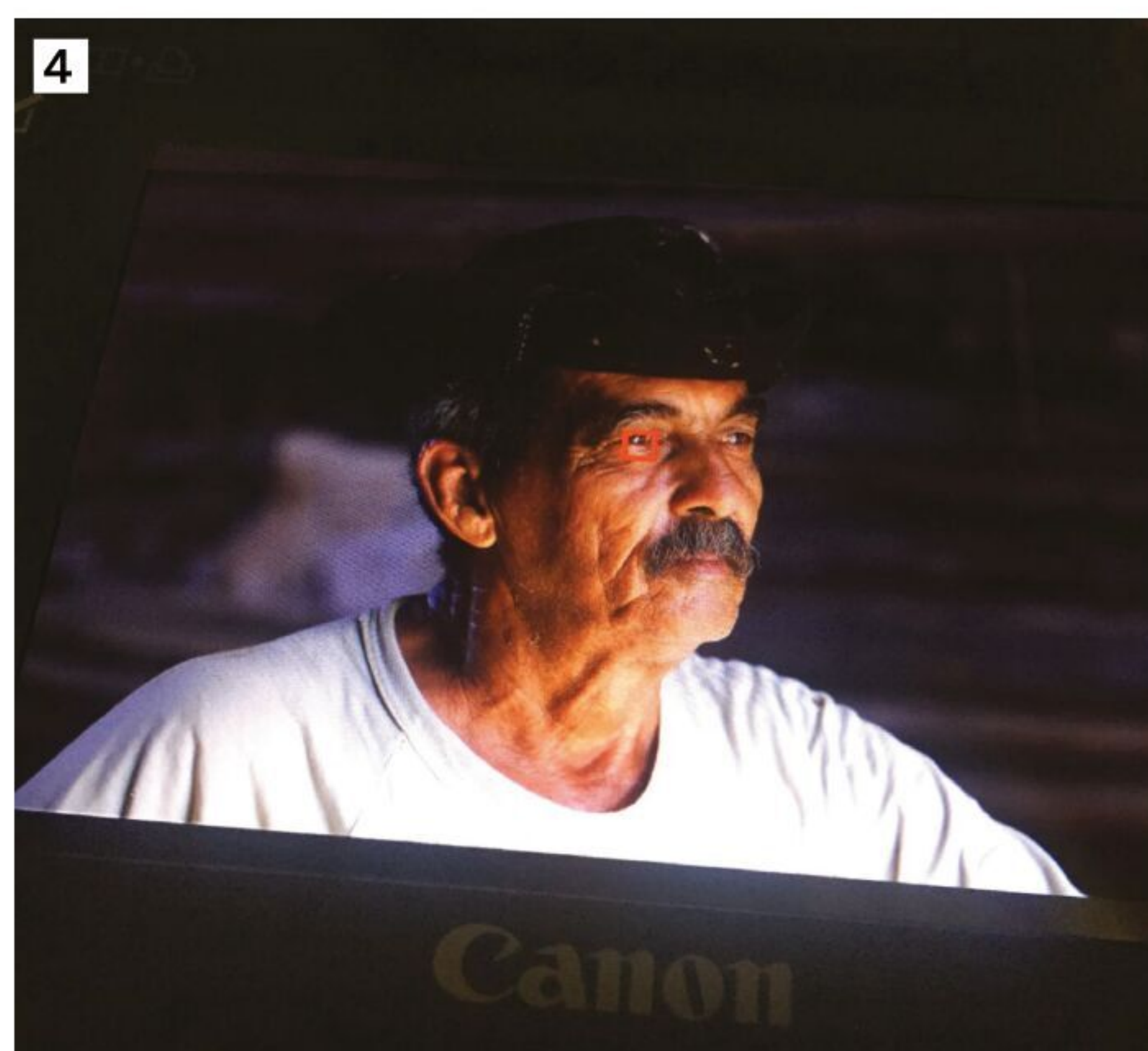
2 Take control of the situation Explain to your subject what you want them to do – where to stand, where to look – then take the first shot to see how everything is looking. Check the exposure, lighting, background and pose and make any necessary adjustments.

3 Take your first portraits Once you're happy with how everything is looking, start shooting your portraits. The initial shot shown in Step 2 included too much, and the subject's arm disappearing out of the frame looked awkward, so for this shot the lens was zoomed tighter on the subject's face.

4 Focus on the eyes The first thing you look at in a portrait is the subject's eyes. They are the 'windows to the soul' and tell us a lot about the person. Therefore, make sure the subject's leading eye, or both eyes, are sharply focused. Lock focus using single-shot AF then quickly re-compose before taking the shot.

5 Keep your subject interested You can't spend hours shooting portraits as most people start to lose interest and get restless. To avoid that, concentrate, try to work quickly, and communicate with your subject so they know what they're doing. You should be able to capture a great portrait in a few minutes.

6 Refine the portrait After taking a few shots you should be getting close to achieving your goal. In this case, the subject was initially photographed looking towards the open door. However, by asking him to look straight at the camera, a much more engaging portrait was achieved, with strong eye contact.



The setup

KEEP THE BACKGROUND SIMPLE

Although the background appears cluttered, because light levels inside the hut are much lower than at the entrance, it will be underexposed and rendered unobtrusive

CHOICE OF SETTING

The subject was posed in his natural environment where he would feel comfortable being photographed. This helps to produce more relaxed portraits

LIGHTING THE SUBJECT

The subject was posed inside a tobacco drying hut, but close to an open door so that indirect daylight flooded his face

Flattering faces

Choosing the right lens can make a big difference to your portraits

The best lens for portraiture depends on the type of portrait you're actually shooting. For classic head-and-shoulders portraits like those here, a short telephoto focal length between 85-135mm is ideal as it will compress perspective a little, which in turn flatters facial features. You can also shoot from a comfortable distance, and depth of field at a wide aperture such as f4 is reduced enough to make sure that distracting backgrounds are thrown well out of focus.

A moderate wide-angle lens with a focal length in the 24-35mm range is very useful for environmental portraits that capture your subject in their surroundings. However, they should be avoided for conventional portraits as you'll need to move too close to your subject, which results in exaggeration of the facial features due to the way wide lenses stretch perspective.



Edit the shot

1 Open the RAW file The RAW file is opened in Adobe Camera Raw and assessed for sharpness and exposure. As the final portrait will be in black and white, only Lens Corrections are applied before the image is opened in Adobe Photoshop CC.

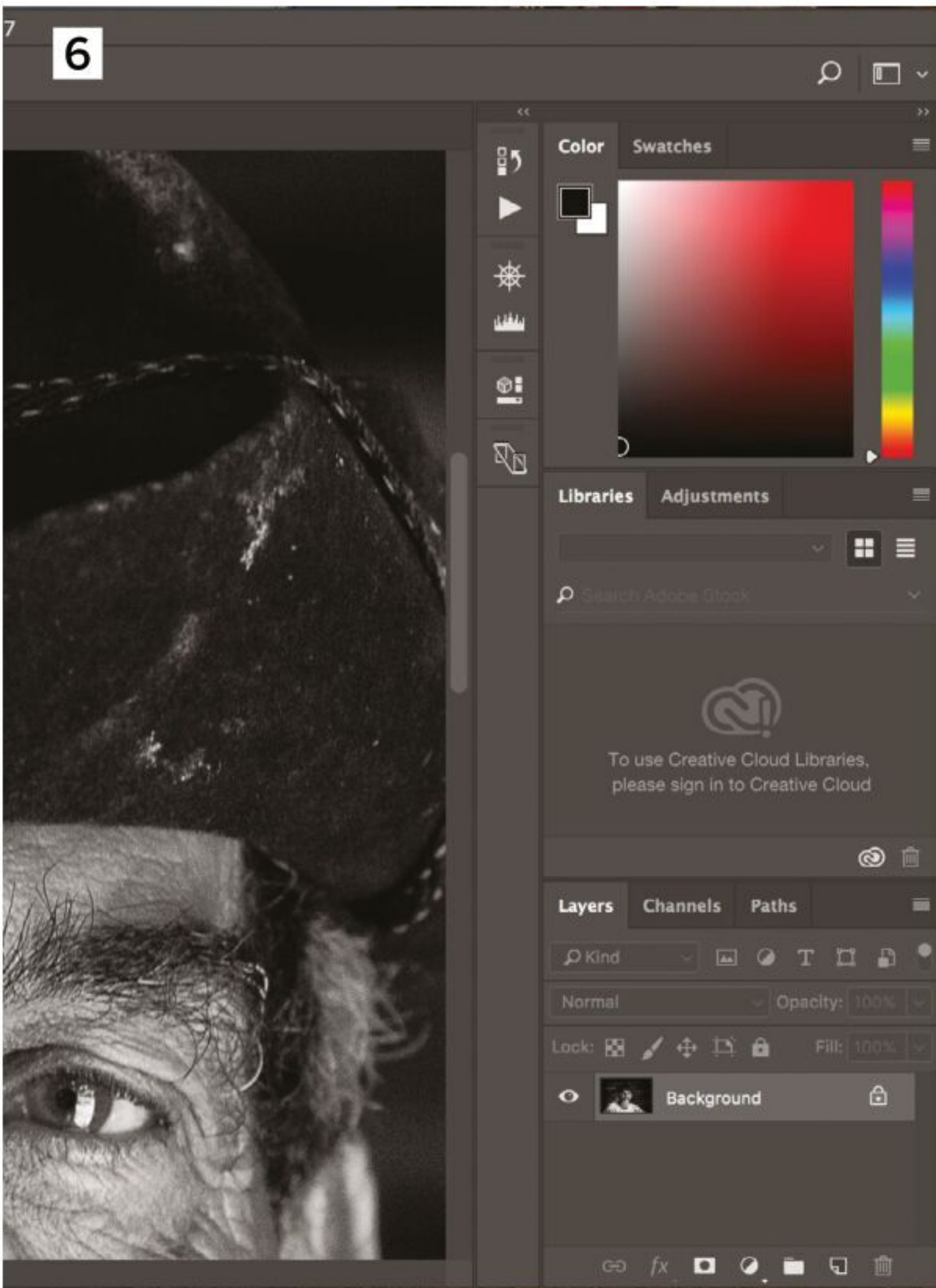
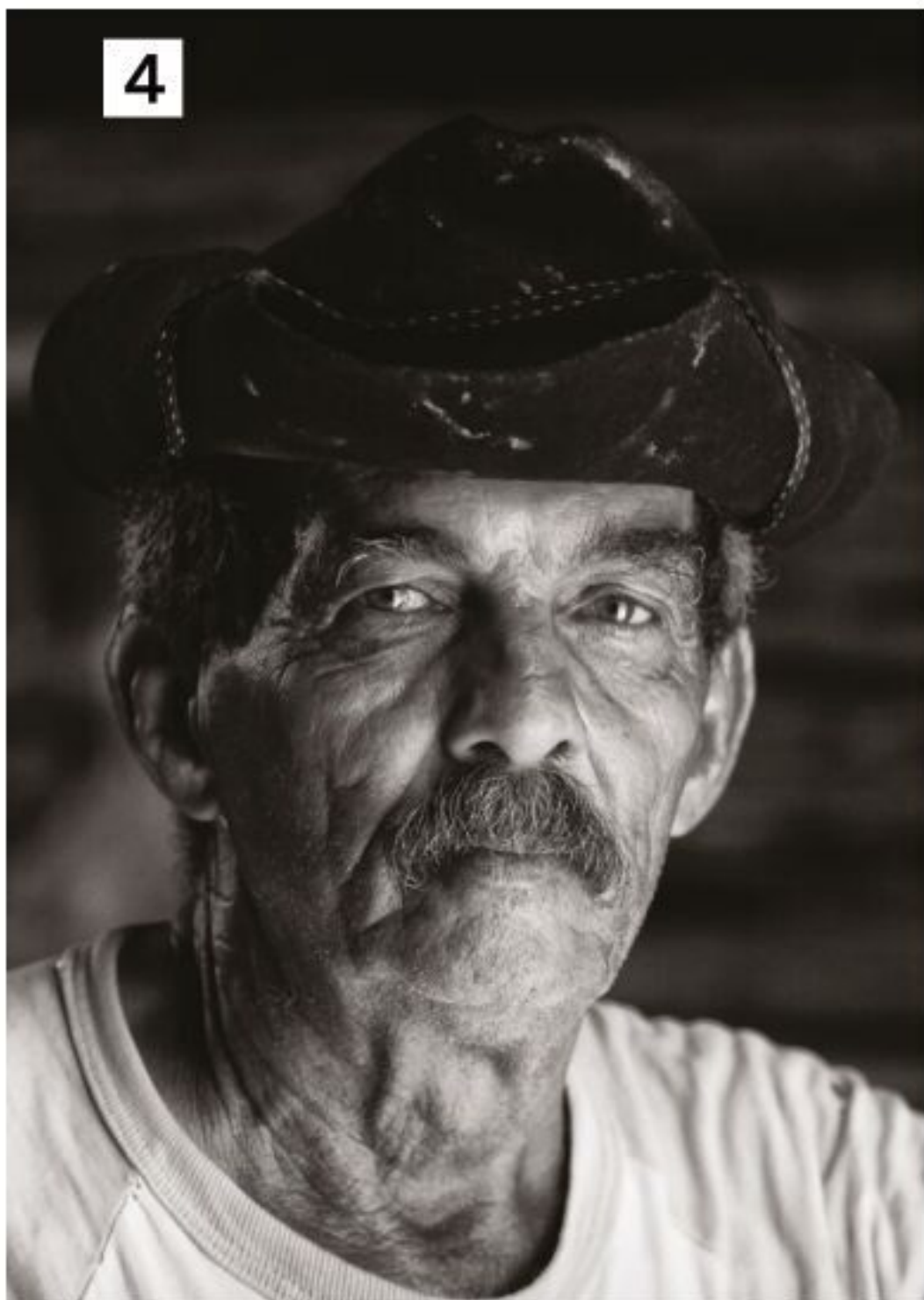
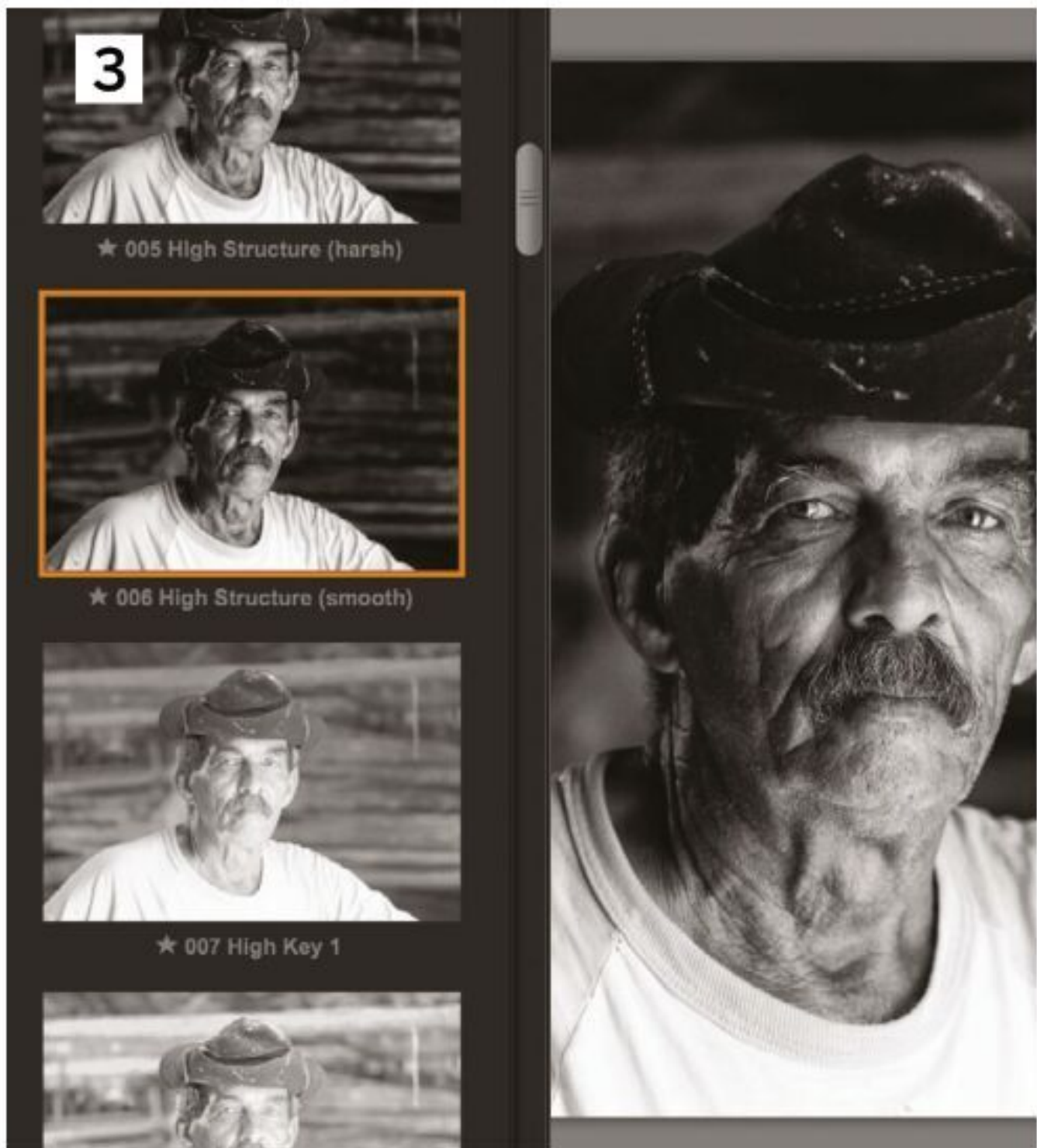
2 Save the image There are some bright highlights in the background that are distracting. These are removed with a few mouse clicks using the Clone Stamp Tool in Photoshop, then the image is saved as a 16-bit TIFF file.

3 Convert to black and white The colour TIFF file is opened in Silver Efex Pro 2 via the Filters menu in Photoshop CC. The High Structure (smooth) preset is selected, which brings out more texture in the subject's weathered skin.

4 Enhance the image Next, select the Burn Edges – All Edges (soft) 2 preset. As the name suggests, this darkens the edges of the image so the subject's face stands out more prominently against the background.

5 Reveal character To make the portrait more characterful, the subject's face is selected using the Lasso Tool and a feathering of 200 pixels. Next, Clarity is increased using Filter>Camera Raw Filter and moving the Clarity slider to the right a little.

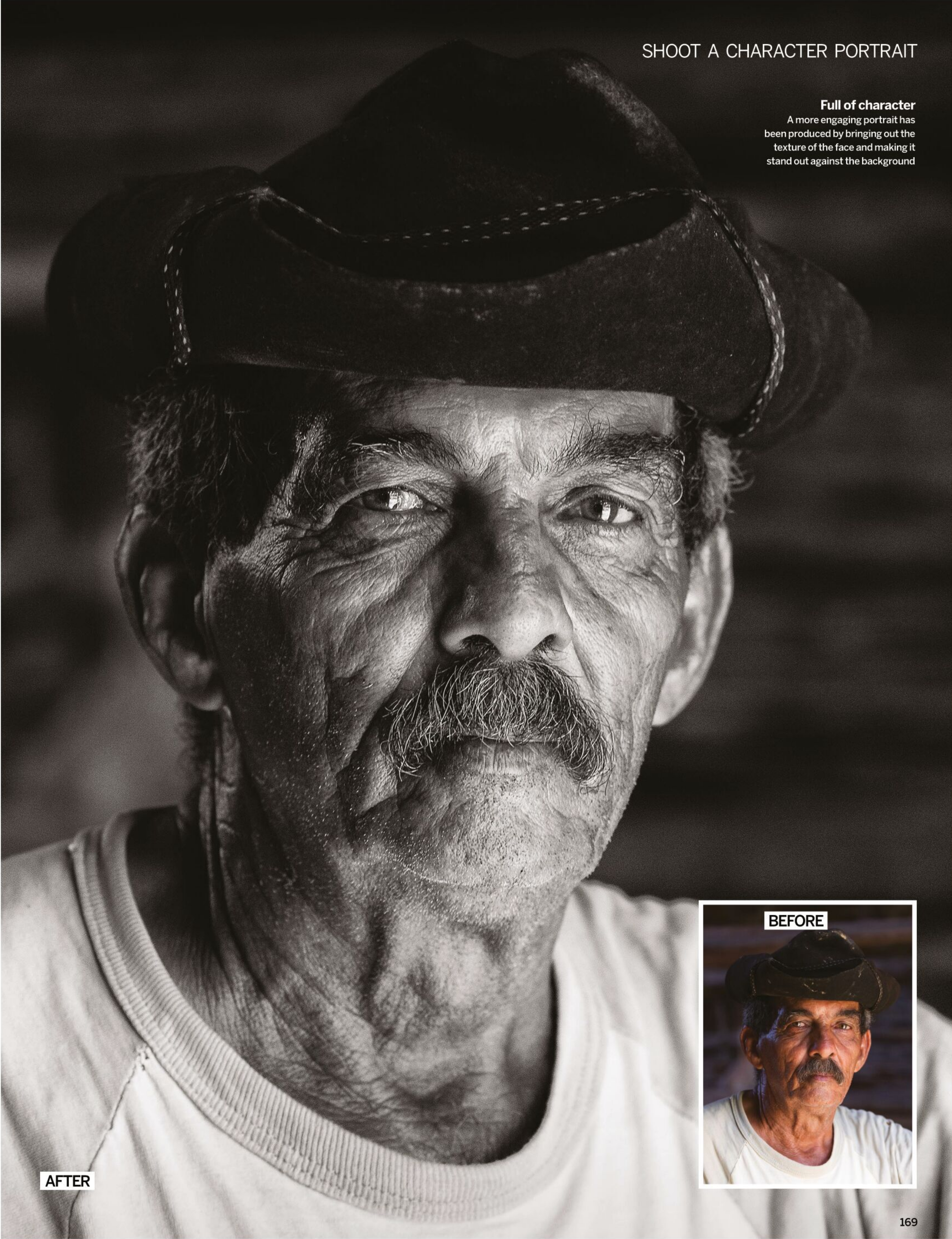
6 Make final tweaks The image is enlarged to 100% and examined. A few sensor blemishes and distracting marks, primarily on the subject's hat, are quickly removed using the Healing Brush Tool, then the layers are flattened and the image saved.



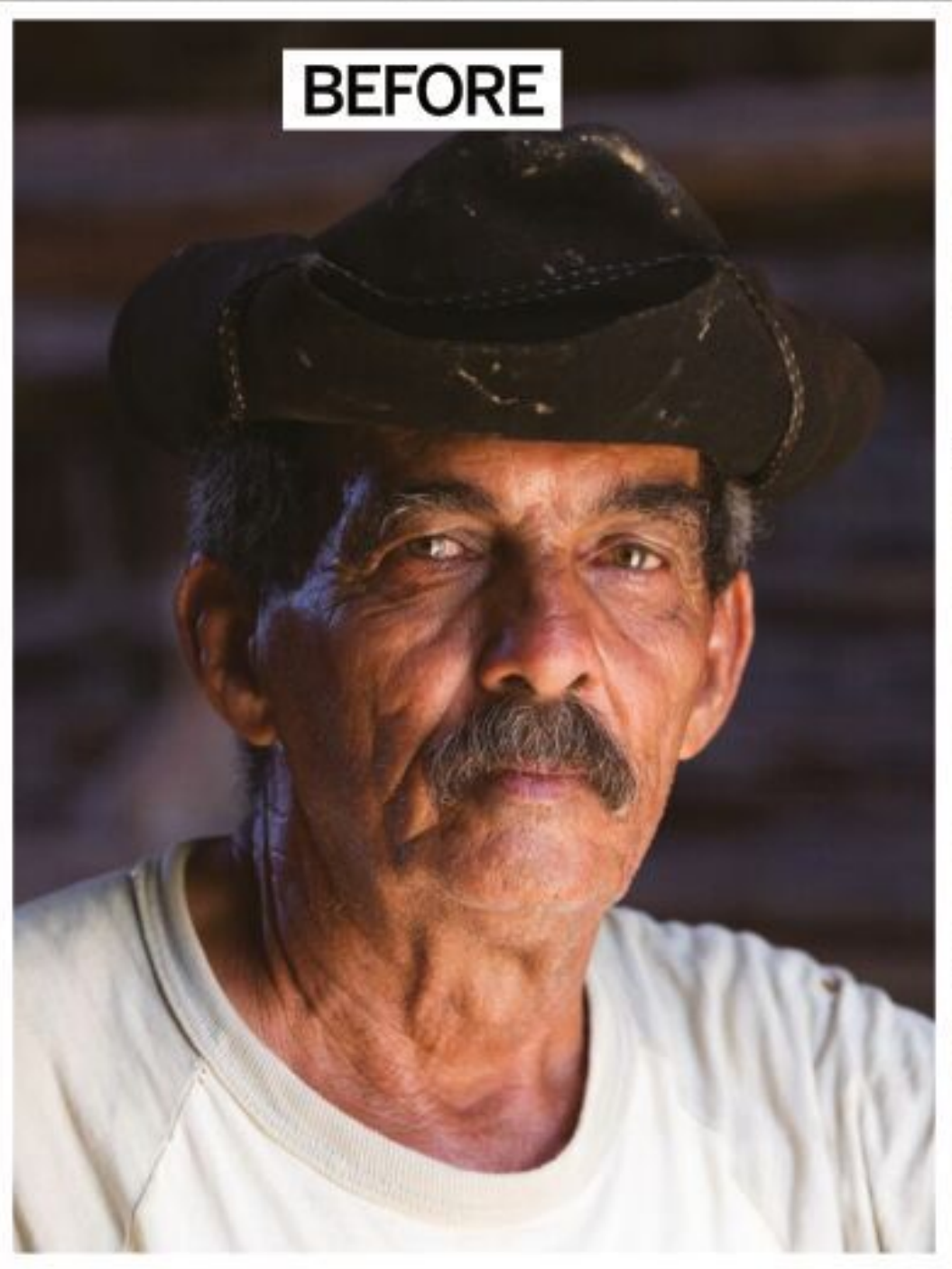
SHOOT A CHARACTER PORTRAIT

Full of character

A more engaging portrait has been produced by bringing out the texture of the face and making it stand out against the background



AFTER



BEFORE

SHOOT CREATIVE PORTRAITS

Learn how to capture creative images by reflecting neon lights into a scene

For this portrait we have chosen an indoor location that has reflective surfaces and neon lights, which will be reflected into the scene by holding a piece of Perspex at an angle in front of the lens. Fairy lights were placed on a shiny surface and spaced out to create bokeh.

It is best to shoot in daylight as we are not using flash, so do take notice of the position of window light and use it to help light your model. Careful placement of white fairy lights helped illuminate our subject's face here.

A camera that can handle a higher ISO is an advantage due to the low light. A Sony a7 and 50mm lens were used here. A wide-open aperture of 1.8 has enabled the capture of a pleasing bokeh from the various lights. A shutter speed of 250 was used to avoid movement, and ISO was 640.

The neon lights ended up out of sight through the viewfinder due to my chosen composition – they were above the model to the left. I used Perspex held close to my lens to bounce reflections of the neon lights into the image and moved it until I could see the reflections.

What you'll need

- A DSLR
- Perspex or glass
- Fairy lights
- Adobe Photoshop
- A model





SHOOT CREATIVE PORTRAITS WITH NEON LIGHTS

**Final edited
portrait**

The final image fully edited
following the steps given, with
distractions minimised
All images © Angi Wallace

Shooting steps

1 Select location Choose a location with neon/fairy lights such as a bar, café or arcade, preferably with good window light. Or, shoot outside in a location with neon lights in the background. Using a café/bar window can help to give extra reflective interest.

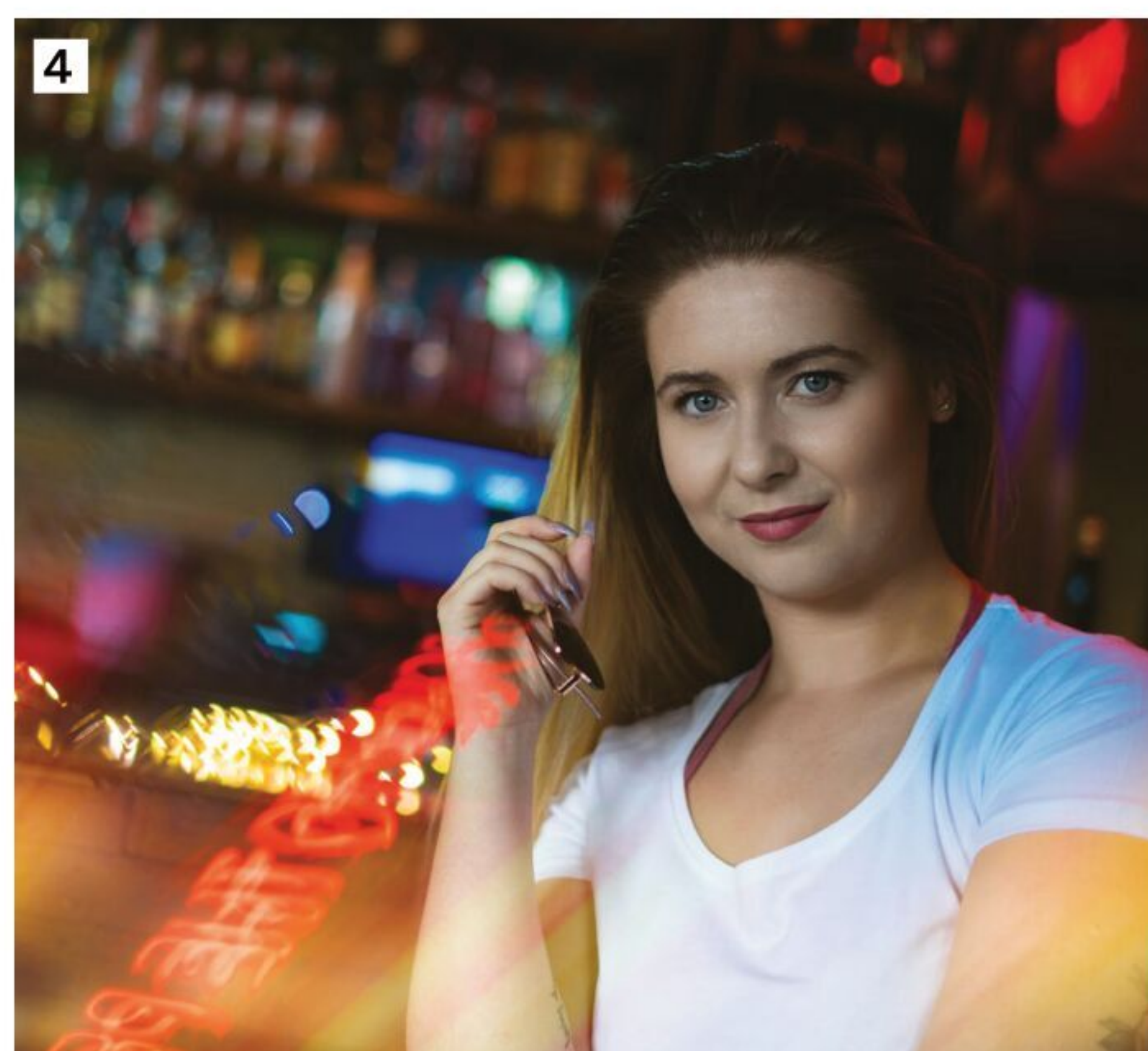
2 Composition Take care in considering your composition, use leading lines and flattering poses. Beware of distractions, and move unwanted objects. Have the neon lights behind your model, maybe inside a window, reflected in a window or by your model's face to light the model up if light is low. Try different compositions.

3 Light your model Make sure your model's face is well lit – if window light or the venue's lights are not enough you can use a reflector to bounce extra light in, or place fairy lights close to your subject. If necessary you can use flash, but it can alter the ambience and create unwanted shadows.

4 Create bokeh Place fairy lights in an area to create more bokeh in front of or behind the model. You can ask your model to hold the lights at one end and you hold the other end. Use warm white fairy lights to light the model's face, or colourful lights to give extra interest. Place some on a shiny surface for double the bokeh.

5 Pose model Choose flattering poses for your model and maybe ask them to hold props such as glasses or a drinking glass to add in more reflections. Having a prop can help your model to relax and offer a wider variety of poses.

6 Bounce reflections Hold a small piece of Perspex, glass or your mobile phone in front of your lens and try lots of different angles to bounce reflections into your image. Watch for distortions affecting the area close to your model's face. If outside you can bounce trees, clouds and buildings etc into your image.



The setup

REFLECTION TOOLS

A simple piece of glass or Perspex can be used for reflections. If you do not have either of those you could use your mobile phone, or look around your home for small reflective objects such as a pepper pot top

CAMERA

Use a camera that handles noise well from high ISOs, such as a Sony a7, with a lens that offers a wide-open aperture for bokeh such as a 50mm 1.8

FAIRY LIGHTS

Battery-operated fairy lights can be in whichever colour you choose, and are better on thin copper wire, which shows up less in the images

Think creatively

Experiment with a range of different objects for more unique effects

You can also try clear glass crystal beads, prisms, an old CD, your mobile phone, or fairy lights – these can produce some lovely effects including reflections, bokeh and rainbows. Try these items when shooting other genres as well, such as landscapes, macro, events and weddings. Using fairy lights and Perspex can really add a whole new dimension to your images.

Some interesting effects can be achieved while shooting concerts; when holding Perspex at the right angle and level within your image, you can make it appear as if people are surrounded by colourful mist. Or sometimes, the lights reflect off the Perspex to produce wonderful shapes and lines.



Edit the shot

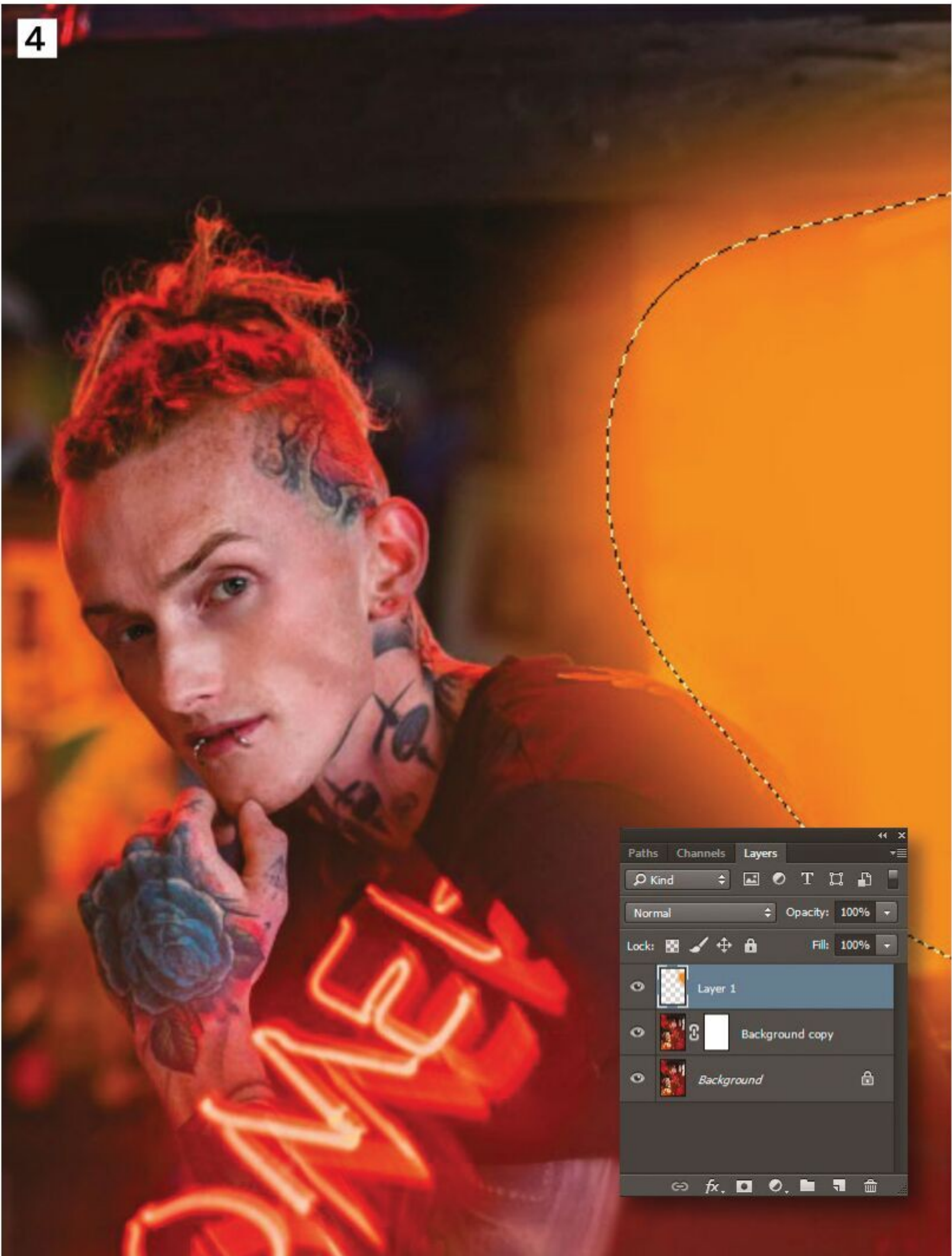
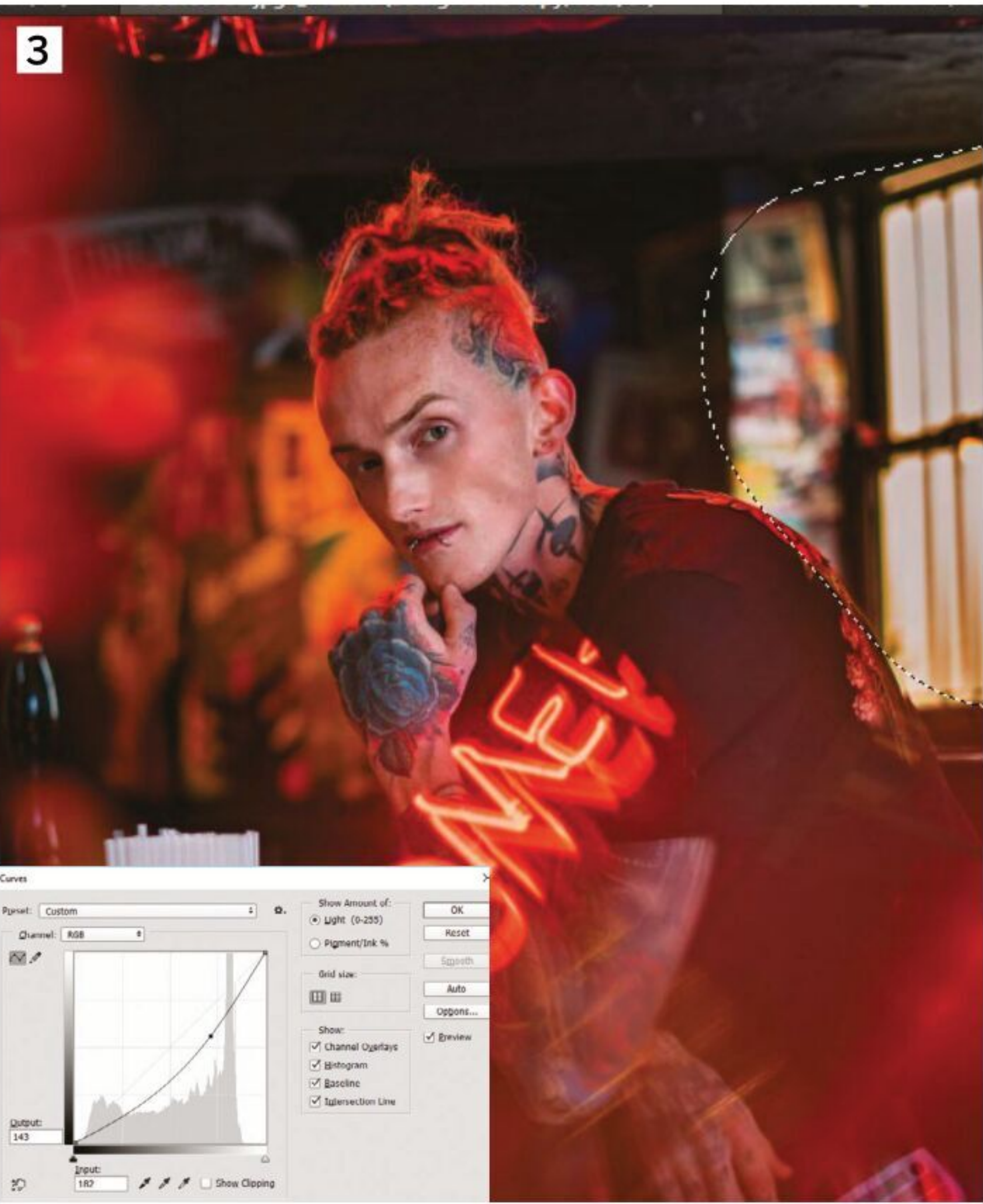
- 1

Remove distractions Open in RAW and tweak your white balance, as so many light sources can play havoc with your results. In Photoshop remove any distracting lights that can draw the eye away from your subject by using the Healing Brush Tool.
- 2

Retouch skin Undertake a quick blemish removal to get rid of any spots using the Healing Brush, followed by some gentle dodging and burning (on a Soft Light neutral grey layer) on the face to accentuate features.
- 3

Darken the window In this image I chose to make it appear as if it was taken at night by introducing a glow from the window, suggesting a street light outside. I selected and feathered the area then used curves to darken first.
- 4

Colour window and straws I added my chosen colour to these areas in a new layer, then changed the layer mode to Overlay and reduced the opacity until it looked right – 80%. I repeated this process for the ceiling area near the window to make it more realistic.

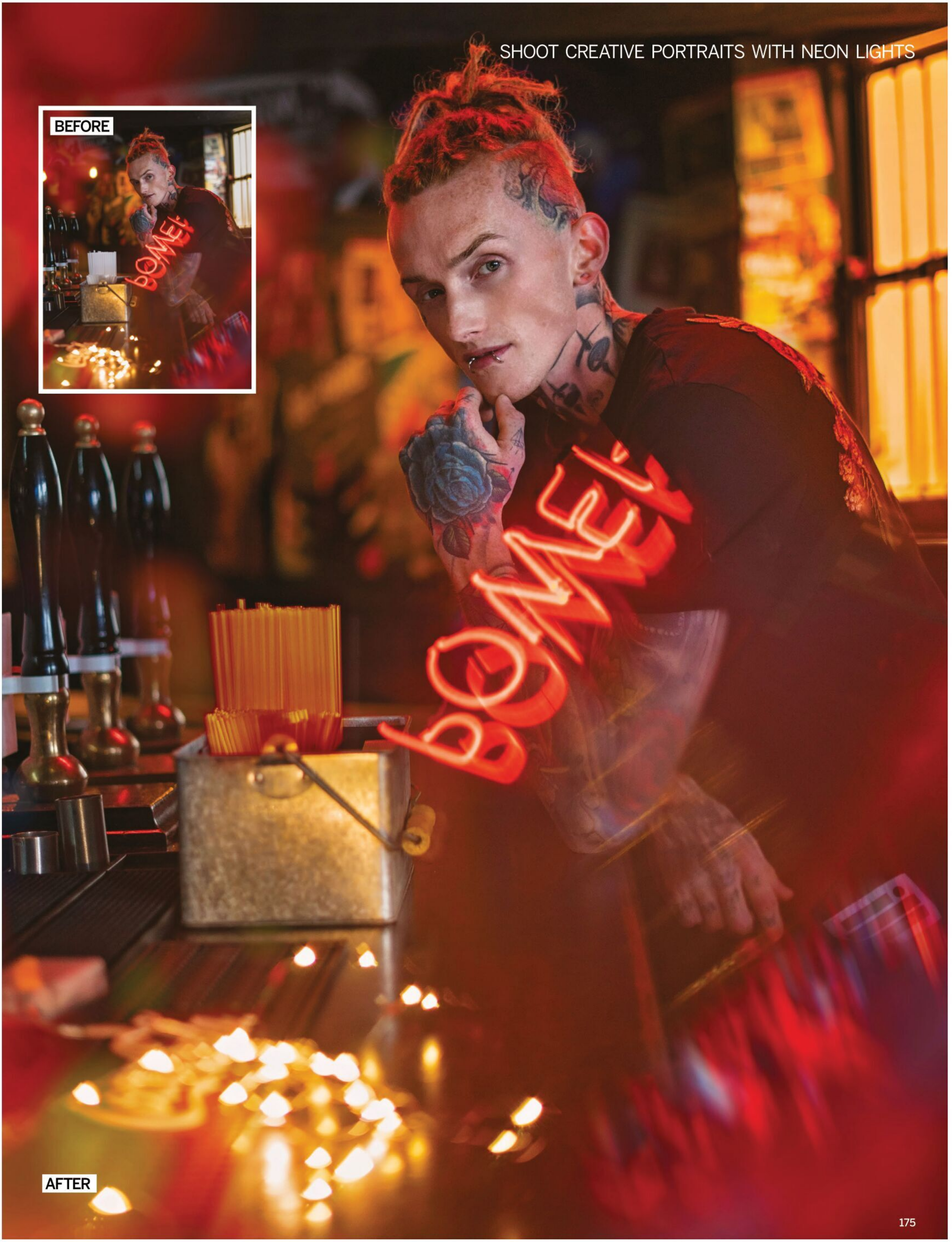


“Remove any distracting lights that can draw the eye away from your subject”

BEFORE



AFTER



SHOOT CREATIVE NEWBORN PORTRAITS

Take adorable portraits of newborn babies safely using simple setups

In this tutorial, you will learn how to take creative portraits of newborn babies safely. More than any other genre of photography, newborns require special care and handling.

The ideal age for a newborn photo session is between 7-14 days old. During these early days, the babies tend to be at their sleepest, making the newborn session run more smoothly. However, it is still possible to get those sleepy curled-up poses with slightly older newborns – they may not curl up so easily, as muscle tone develops, so poses would need to be modified to suit.

For this shoot, we are using a full-frame Canon EOS 5D Mark IV with a 24-70L zoom. You can also choose to shoot with prime lenses – either the 50mm or 35mm. Just make sure that the lens you choose always allows you to be within arm's reach of the baby.

Safety is paramount. Never leave a baby unattended and if you need to step away at any point, ask the parents to ensure the baby is safe and comfortable.

Right

Finished newborn edit

Fully retouched, edited and finished newborn photo with colour corrections, and flaky skin, stray hair and fluff removed

All images © KW Photography

What you'll need

- DSLR camera
- Lens 20-70mm/
50mm/35mm
- Backdrop
- Bowl/bucket
- Wrap/scarf
- Studio flash
- Large octobox
- Photoshop





Shooting steps

1 Swaddle the baby Make the baby feel safe and secure by swaddle-wrapping them. Use a stretch wrap first, then hold them securely making sure the arms and feet are comfortable. Over this, use a second wrap to tie in with the colour scheme being used.

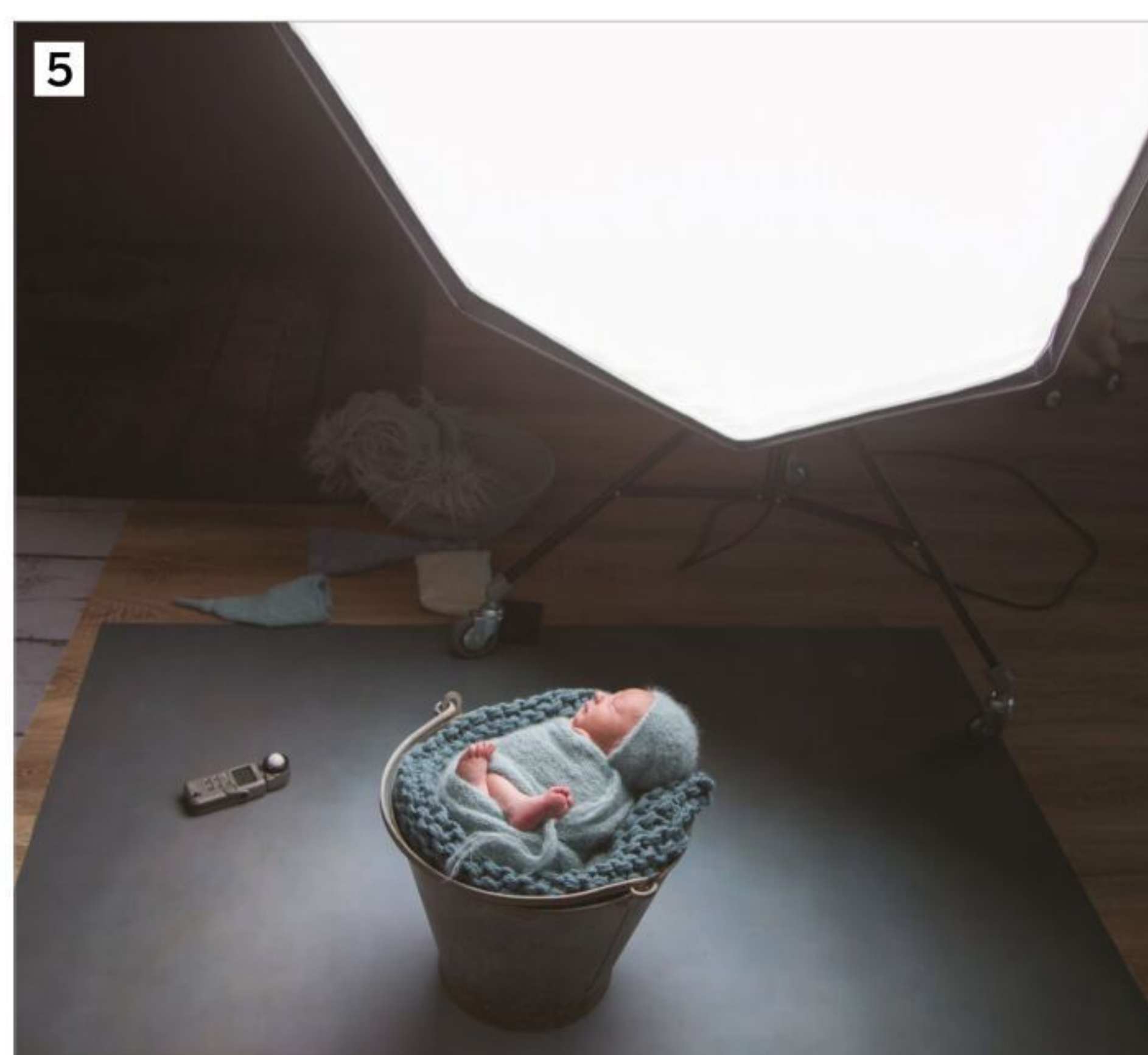
2 Position baby in prop Make sure no part of the baby touches the prop and that they are safe and comfortable. Use a weight at the bottom of the prop to ensure it will not tip. Have the head positioned higher than the feet so the feet don't become the closest part to the lens.

3 Meter your light Use a light meter to accurately set up your light and remove the guesswork from using studio lights. Set the shutter speed and ISO on the meter and take a flash reading to give your aperture. A trick to help soften the appearance of newborn skin is to slightly overexpose.

4 Use a grey card White balance can cause problems when working with any subject. Grey cards are designed to help you set the colour temperature. Use the grey card as a neutral colour reference and starting point for your white balance. You can set this in-camera or use the tools found in Camera Raw or Lightroom.

5 Position the light The position of the light depends on the style of image you'd like to produce. Newborn portraits tend to be lit softly using a large modifier to create a soft shadow and avoid creating too much contrast. Use the edge of the softbox to feather the light across the subject while the rest of the light will act as a filler.

6 Shooting angles If shooting above a newborn, it's important to keep your position correct to get the right angle. Make sure the camera strap is securely around your neck and place yourself directly over the baby. Use a 35mm or zoom, but don't stand on steps in case you fall. Baby safety is paramount.



The setup

STUDIO FLASH WITH LARGE SOFTBOX

If you are shooting from above, then the light still needs to feather across the baby from the direction of the head

MINIMAL

Keep it simple with newborns. When it comes to styling, the less fuss the better.

STYLING

Keep to harmonious colour setups with babies, avoiding colours that create strong colour casts on the skin. Choose soft fabrics as the subject is a precious newborn and needs to feel safe and snuggled

Tips for a successful session

Apply these simple strategies to help the session run smoothly

It's rare that the newborn baby will arrive asleep, stay asleep for the duration of the photo session and then go home asleep. So, you'll need to allow lots of time to settle them, and for them to be fed and changed.

To help the session go as smoothly as possible, ensure the room is heated to about 24 degrees. When the baby is wrapped this can be reduced. They need to feel warm and cosy, although not too hot.

A good option is to use white noise to help settle the baby; there are lots of phone apps you can download for this purpose. Settle the baby yourself rather than asking the parents to do it. Gently swaying and stroking the nose are great ways to relax a baby. If you stay calm and confident then the baby will feel relaxed too.



Edit the shot

1 Image selection and white balance Using the eyedropper tool in Lightroom, select the image with the grey card and click on the grey card using the eyedropper. This will change your white balance. Sync the settings to the final image you've selected to

2 Remove unwanted elements Using Photoshop, clean up the image. Use Content-Aware Fill to remove the larger items, like the photographer's feet. Use the patch tool to select skin flakes and spots to remove. However, leave some skin flakes or the baby will look plastic!

3 Red skin reduction Next we'll do some hue and saturation adjustments in Photoshop. Select the red channel and take the Hue slider down to -180 until the areas containing red show as purple. Move the colour hue, selecting the skin, and adjust the Hue slider to +8. Mask the adjustment on the lips so they stay red.

4 Liquify As a last step, you can tidy up the shape of the wrap using Photoshop's Liquify filter and using the Push tool to gently adjust any elements of the image that are not in the right place.

Opposite page
Creative newborn photography

The 'before' image has elements that need removing such as flakiness on the skin. It also needs adjusting to reduce redness



BEFORE



AFTER

CREATE A WET-PLATE PORTRAIT

A digital quick fix for one of the world's oldest photographic processes

The wet-plate collodion process was invented by English sculptor Frederick Scott Archer in 1851, and due to its ability to record fine detail using relatively short exposures (for the day) it went on to revolutionise photography for decades. The traditional process is still popular today among a dedicated group of analogue photographers, primarily in the USA, but it's incredibly complicated; it requires the coating of glass plates with homemade emulsion on location, so they can be exposed while still wet (hence the name) and processed immediately after exposure. You basically have to take a chemical lab and darkroom everywhere you go, as well as a large-format camera! If that all sounds just a little too involved, you'll be pleased to know that there's a digital alternative. The purpose of this tutorial is to take you through it step by step, from shooting the initial portrait to finalising the edited image. You do need a basic understanding of Photoshop to master this technique, but after a few attempts you'll know the steps off by heart and be producing fantastic wet-plate images every time.

Right

Revealing character

The wet-plate effect looks amazing, but done traditionally, it's very complicated and time-consuming. The digital equivalent is so much quicker and easier and as every image is different, you can add your own personal touch

All images © Lee Frost

What you'll need

- Digital camera
- Standard zoom lens
- A willing subject
- Computer
- Adobe Photoshop

CREATE A WET-PLATE PORTRAIT



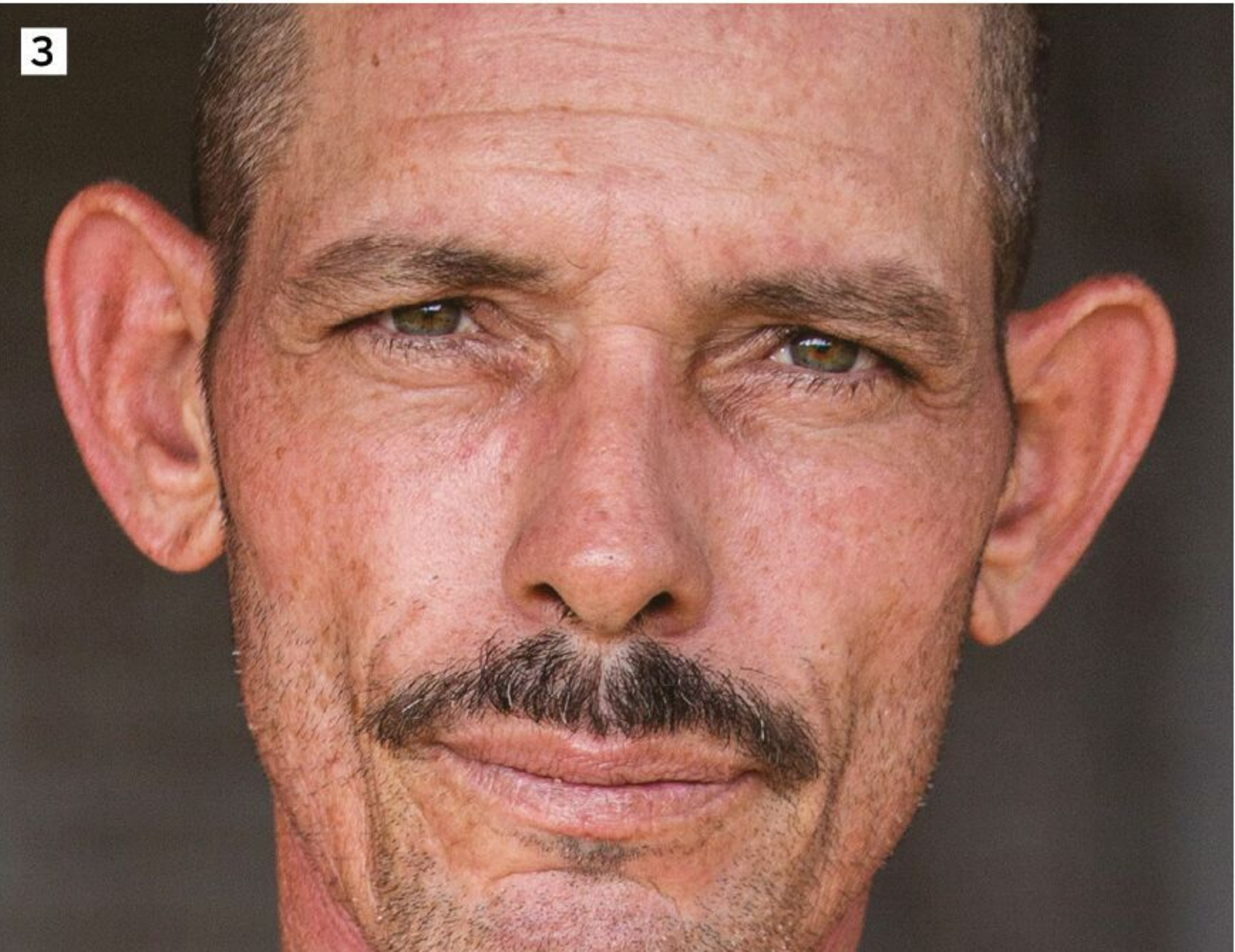
Shooting steps

1 Set up your camera Auto white balance, single-shot AF and multi-zone metering was selected. Aperture priority mode was also set, plus a wide lens aperture to reduce depth of field and make sure the background was thrown out of focus. The ISO was increased to 1600.

2 Flatter the face The best lens for portraiture has a focal length of 85-135mm. Lenses in this range slightly compress perspective, which in turn flatters our facial features. At wide apertures, depth of field is also shallow so you can throw the background well out of focus.

3 Focus on the eyes Make sure you focus on your subject's eyes so that they come out sharp. It doesn't matter if other parts of the face are out of focus, but the eyes must be sharp as they are the first thing we look at in a portrait. If you're using AF, lock focus on one eye then re-compose.

4 Keep shooting Even when you think you've got 'the shot', it's always worth taking more. Portrait subjects tend to become more confident as time passes, so the last shots you take will often be the best. Chat to your subject while shooting, and show them the portraits.



The setup

RELAX YOUR SUBJECT

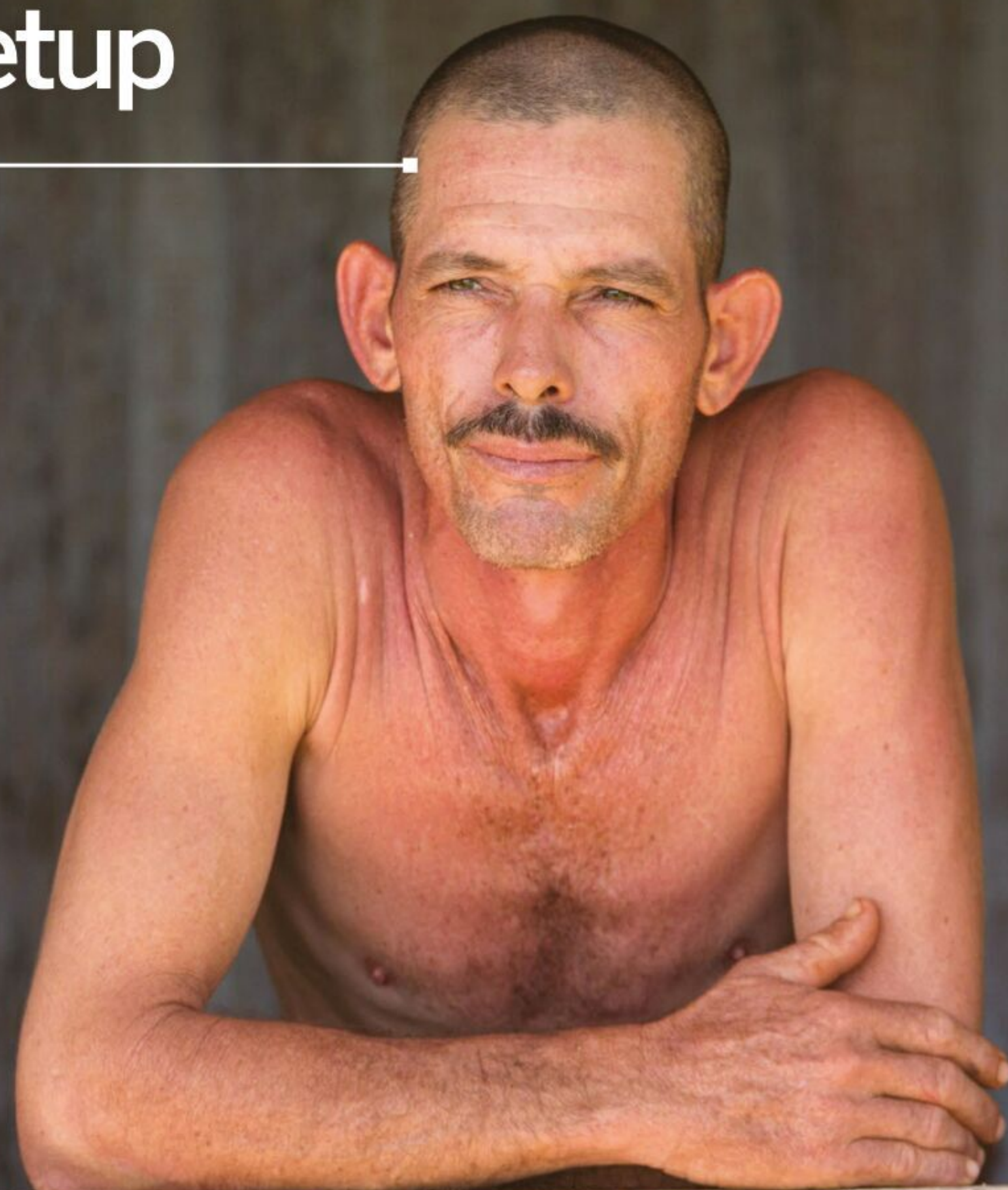
If your subject feels at ease, you'll take more natural portraits, so choose a setting that your subject is familiar with – in this case, his home

PLAIN BACKGROUND

Keep the background nice and simple so your subject stands out and is the focus of attention. Fussy backgrounds are distracting

SOFT LIGHT

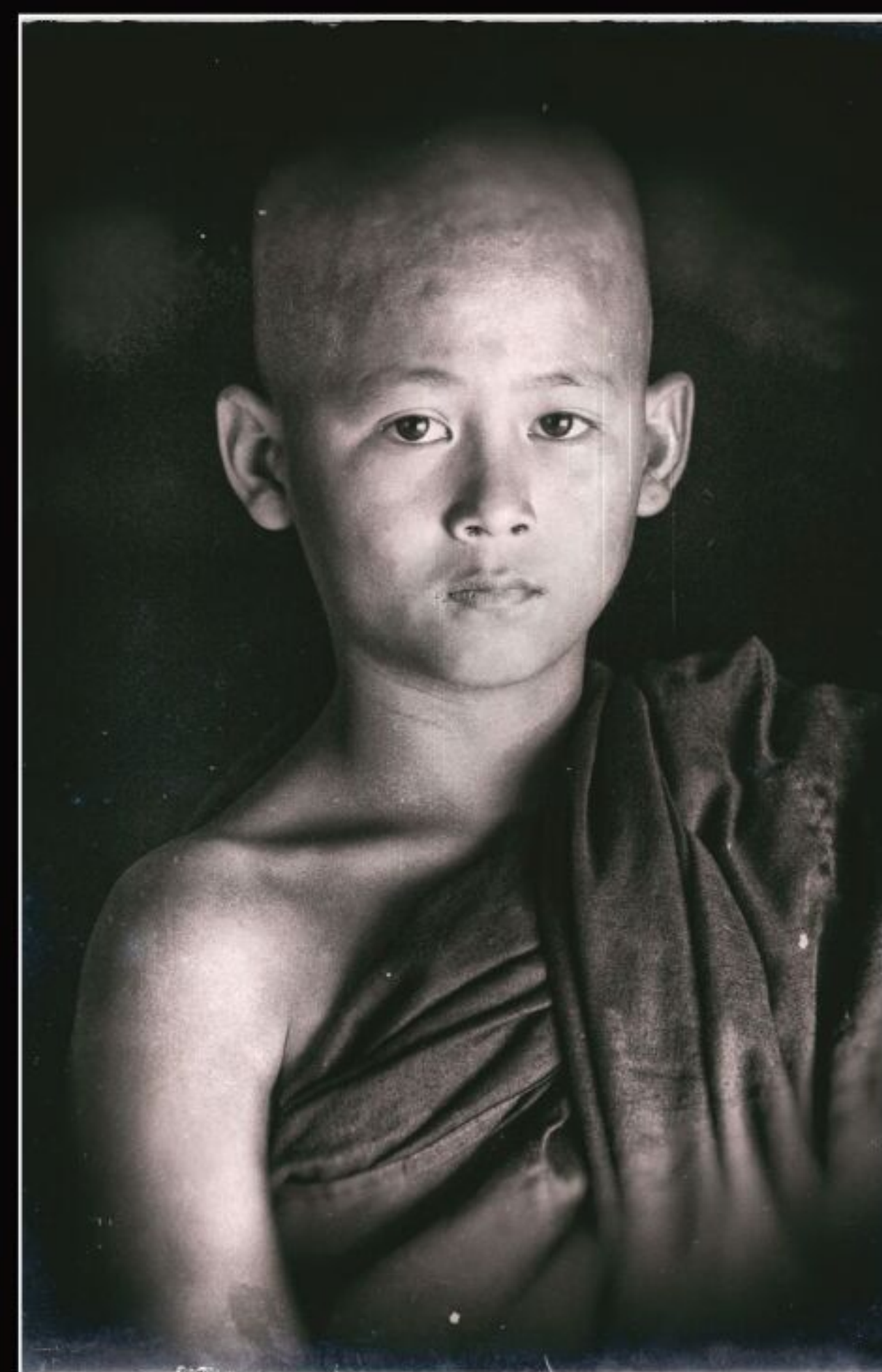
Harsh, contrasty light rarely works for this type of portrait, so pose your subject in the shade – a porch blocked out the sun during this shoot



Analog Efex Pro 2

If you're short of time, this fantastic software will do all the work for you

Although the digital version of the wet-plate technique is far quicker and easier than the traditional one, it's still quite involved, requiring numerous steps to create a multi-level image (see the editing tutorial). If you don't fancy going to those lengths, you could take the quick and dirty route by using Analog Efex Pro 2 and simply playing around with some of the presets – there are even wet-plate presets! Analog Efex Pro 2 is part of the Nik Software Collection from DxO (dxo.com). You can buy the entire collection – which also includes the fantastic Silver Efex Pro 2 for black and white conversion – for just £59/\$69, or download a free 30-day trial and try before you buy. It's available for both Mac and PC.



Edit the shot

1 Open and tweak the RAW file Open the RAW file in Adobe Camera Raw and undertake some basic edits – apply Lens Corrections, tweak contrast and clarity, then open the image in Photoshop and save it. Now let the fun begin!

2 Sharpen the image Wet-plate images tend to be very sharp in the centre, so sharpness is boosted in the source image. You can use any sharpening method – High Pass works well. Here we used Sharpener Pro 3, part of the Nik Collection.

3 Add some blur Traditional wet-plate images are shot with large-format cameras and long exposures, so some subject movement is common. Mimic this on an adjustment layer by adding some Motion Blur from the PS Filters menu.

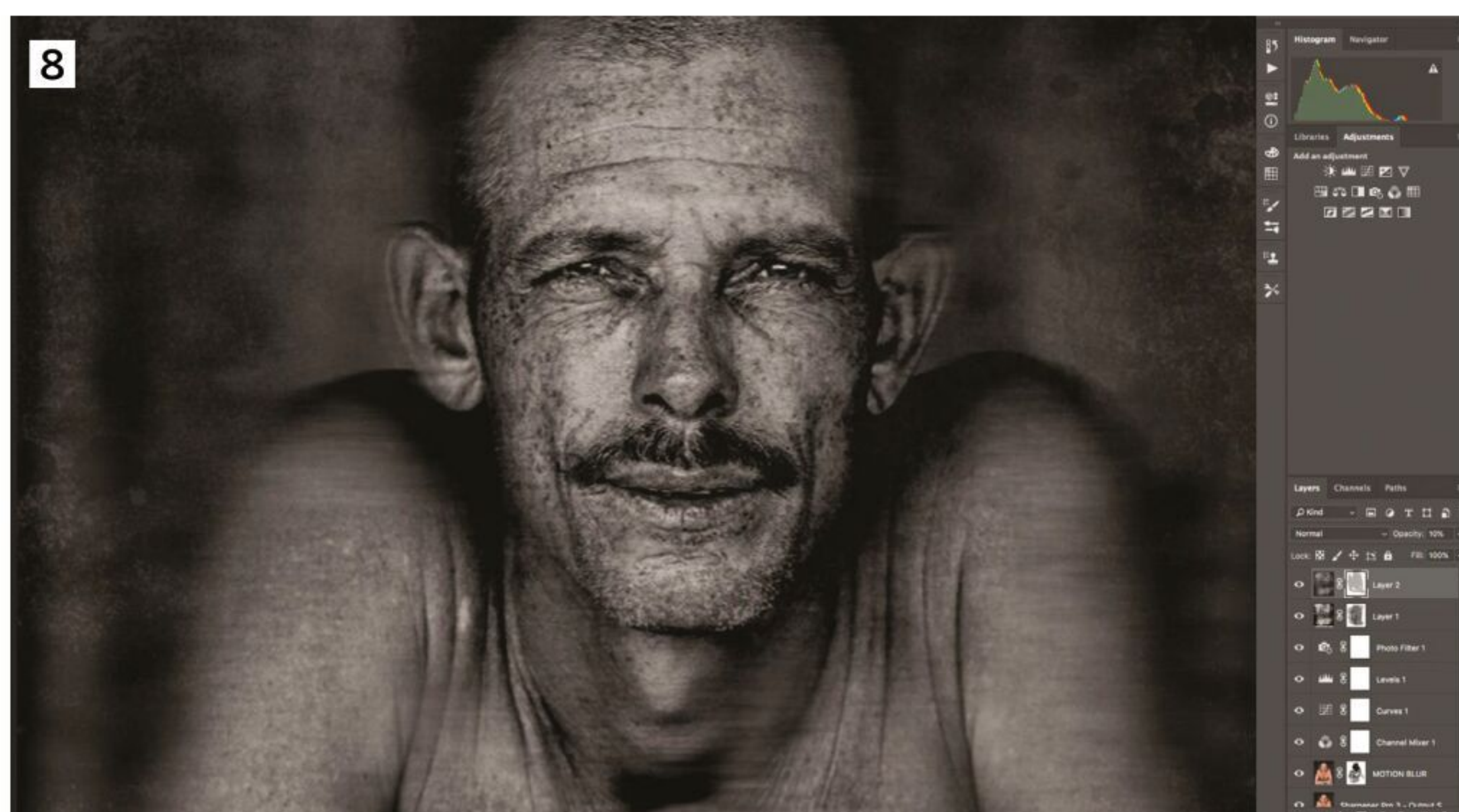
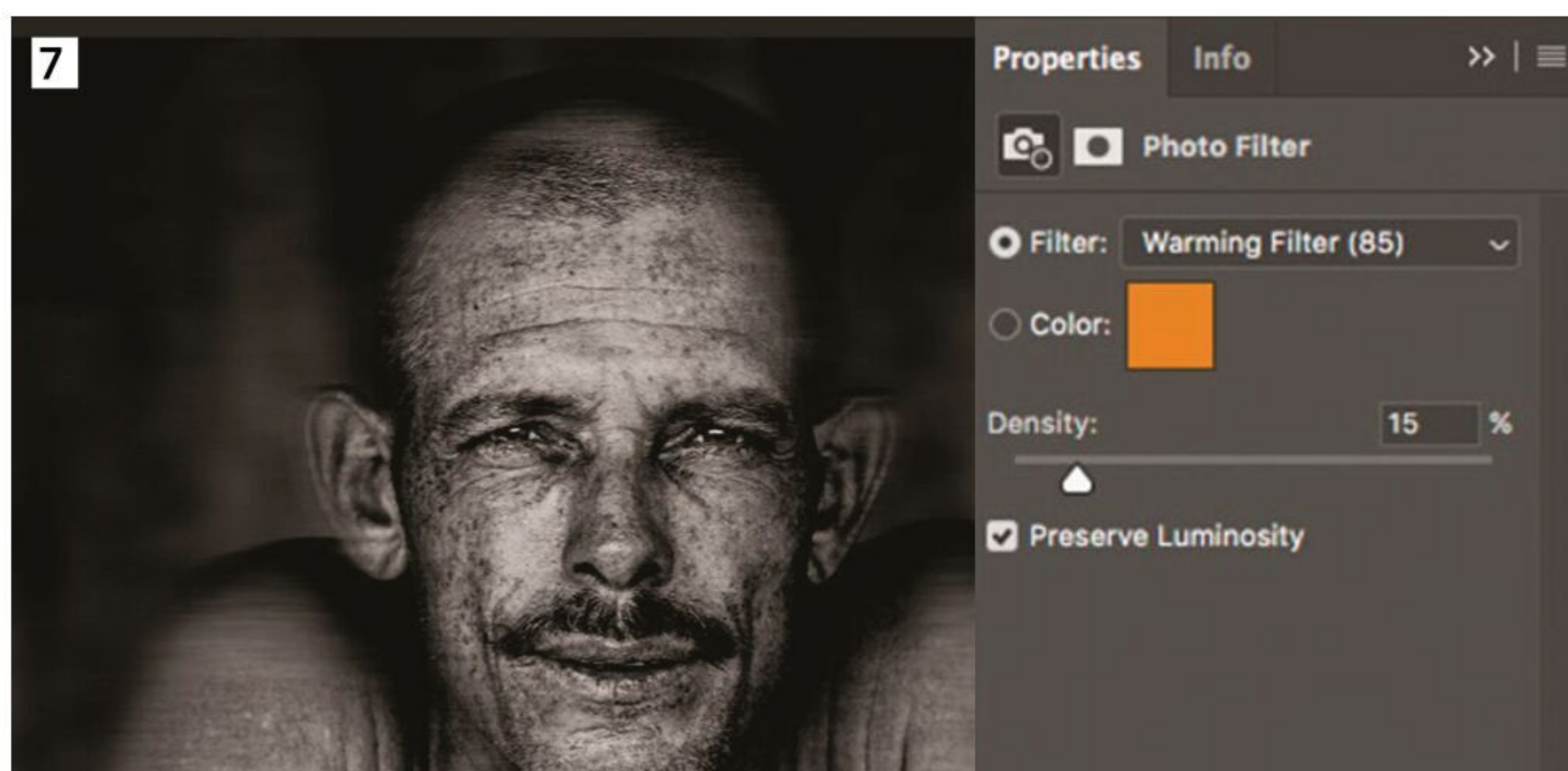
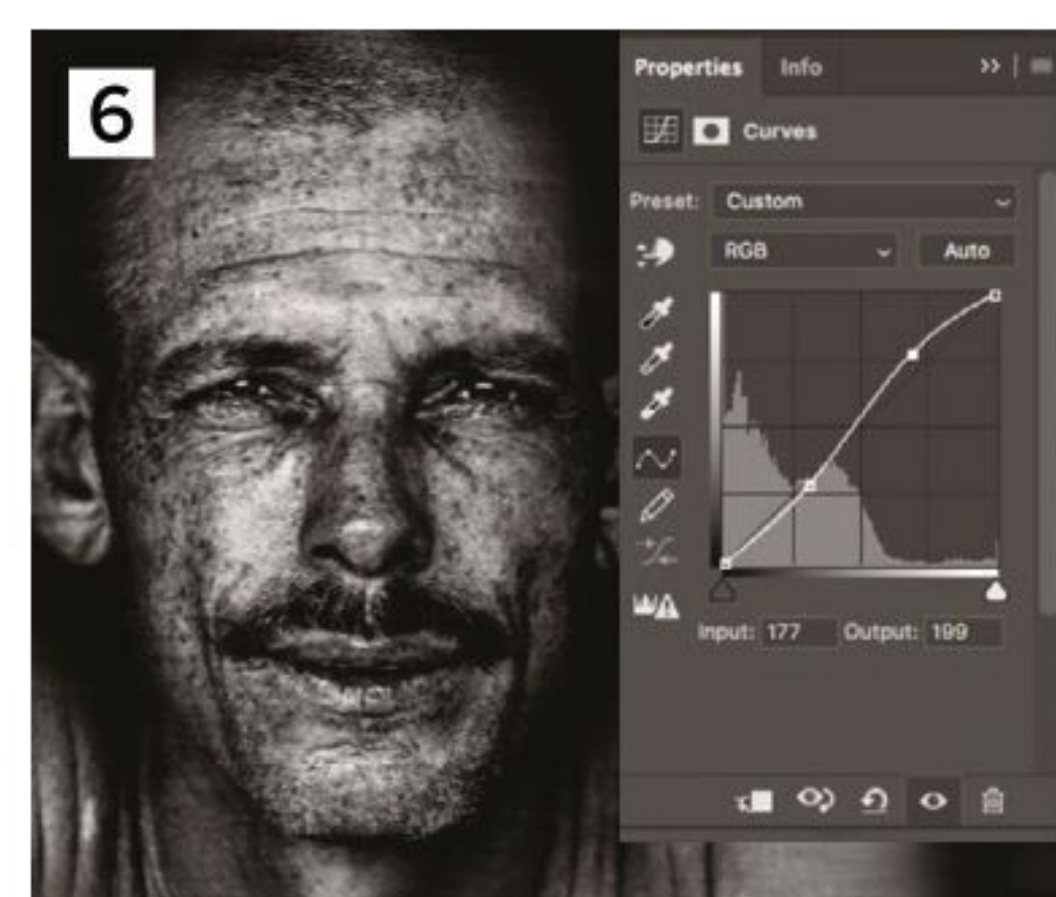
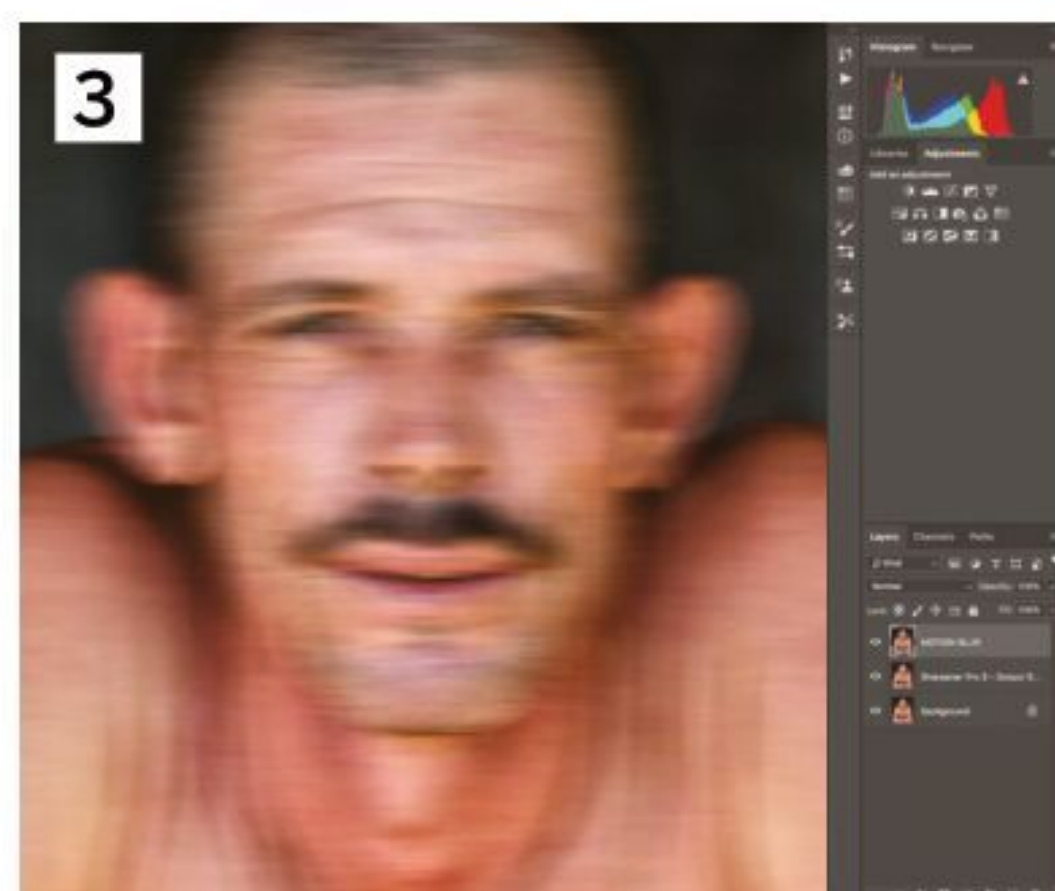
4 Reveal the sharp bits Add a Layer Mask to the Motion Blur layer then, using the Eraser Tool and a soft brush with opacity around 50%, rub out the blur in the central area of the image so only the edges are still blurred.

5 Channel Mixer Go to Layer>Adjustment Layer>Channel Mixer and click on the Monochrome box. Set the Red channel to -100, the Green channel to 0 and the Blue channel to +200, then adjust the channels to get the look you want.

6 Curves adjustment Go to Layer>Adjustment Layer>Curves then boost contrast by creating a small S-Curve. This is all down to personal preference, but the image should have quite a dark and moody look to it.

7 Add warmth Head over to Layer>Adjustment Layer>Photo Filter then add a little warmth to the image using the Warming Filter (85). Real wet plates often have a slight tone due to the chemicals that are used in their creation.

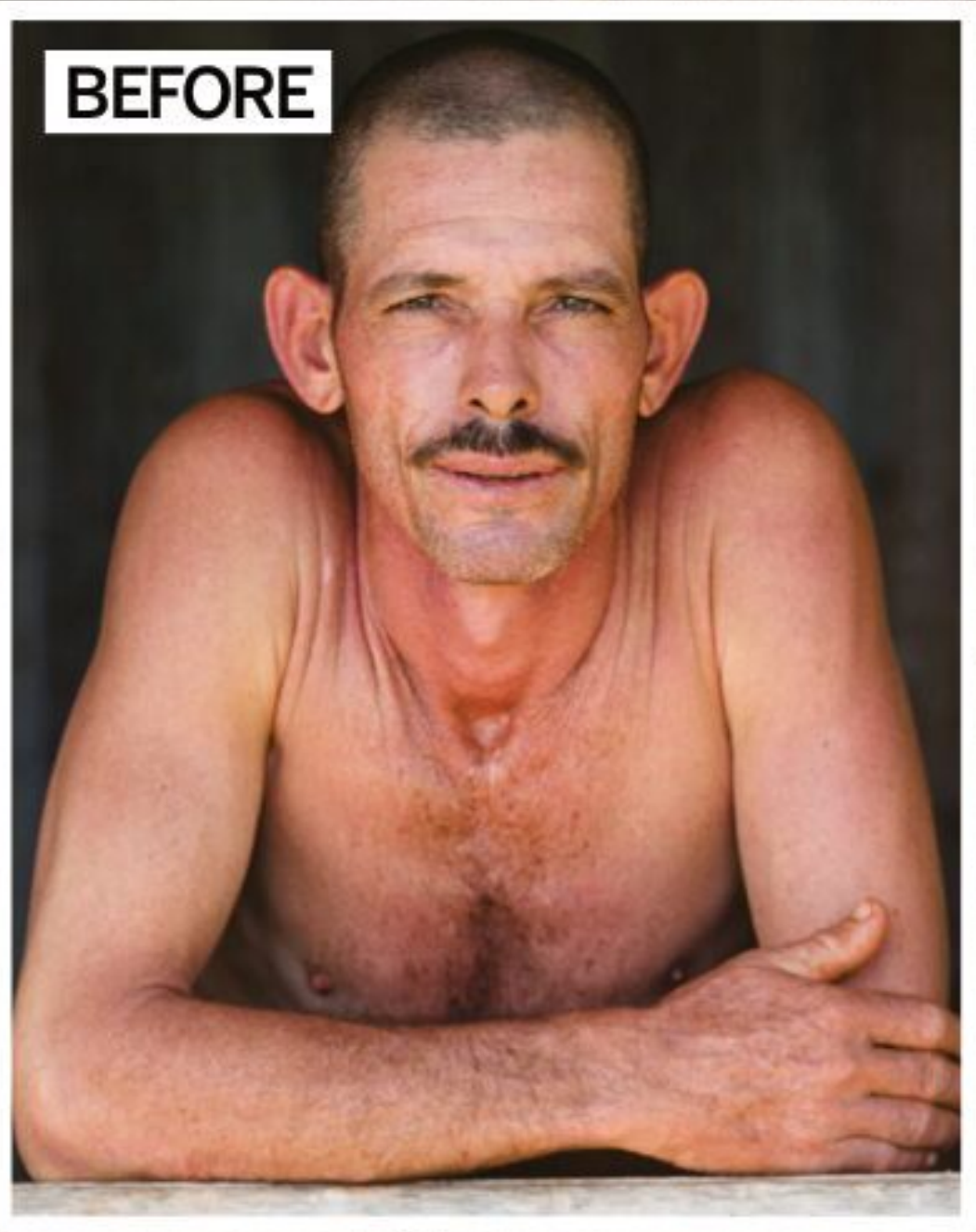
8 Tweak texture Find some free texture images online – metal and rust are ideal – then drag and drop a couple, one at a time, over the main image with the Move Tool and adjust the opacity of the layer until you're happy with the effect.



CREATE A WET-PLATE PORTRAIT

Liquid light

These two Before and After portrait images couldn't be more different, yet both originated from the same RAW file



AFTER

TURN ROCK INTO ART

When dull weather rules out grand vistas, fill your frame with geological delights

There's nothing more frustrating than planning a hard-earned day out with your camera, only to find that the weather fails to live up to the forecast or your expectations. Grey skies and flat light are hardly conducive to dramatic landscapes, and your initial reaction may well be to pack up and head home.

But don't be so hasty to throw in the towel. Landscape photography isn't just about grand vistas – small details in a scene can also be a source of great images, and they actually suit the soft light you can find on those dreary days.

This step-by-step tutorial is all about shooting details in rock. You never have to travel far in the countryside or on the coast to find a lump of rock, and if you take a closer look, you'll often see that it's full of beautiful shapes, textures, patterns and colours; almost a representation of the landscape itself, but in miniature form.

Shooting rock details is easy. You don't need any exotic optics or advanced techniques, just a keen eye. And plus, you can still take great rock images even on rainy days; with your camera pointing down, you can stand under an umbrella and shoot away, without worrying about your camera getting soaked or any raindrops on your lens spoiling the shots. Wet rocks often look better than dry ones too!

Right

Sedimentary swirls, Northumberland

Spittal Beach near Berwick-upon-Tweed is the location for this image. At low tide, a band of colourful sedimentary rock is revealed and you can spend hours shooting amazing shapes, swirls, stripes and colours
All images © Lee Frost

What you'll need

- 📷 Camera
- 📷 Lens
- 📷 Tripod
- 📷 Remote release
- 📷 Umbrella (in the rain)





Shooting steps

1 Find the location Interesting rock formations can be found all over the coast and inland, so keep your eyes peeled when you're out and about and make a note of any promising locations. Sedimentary rock works well as it often contains different-coloured bands.

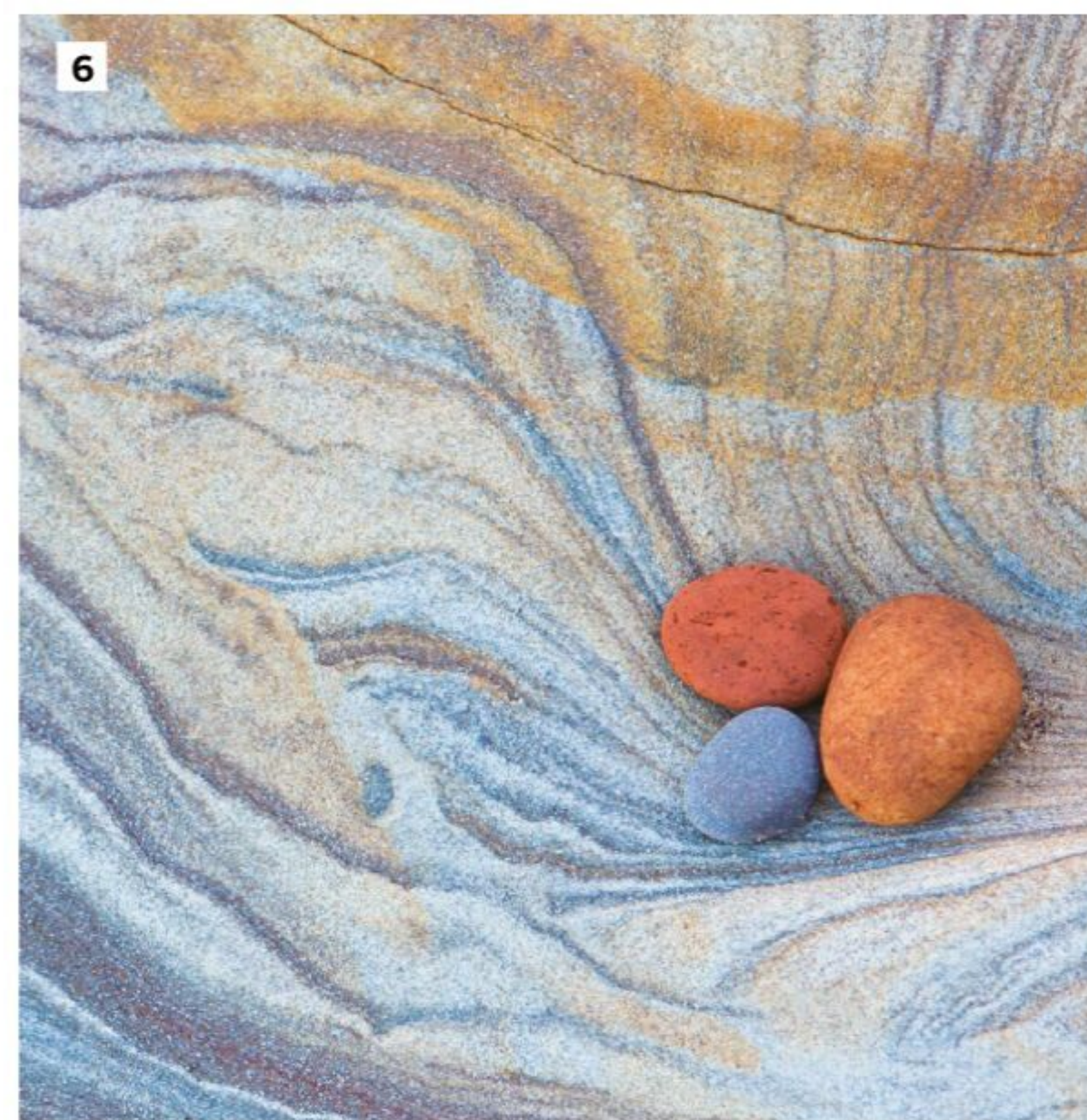
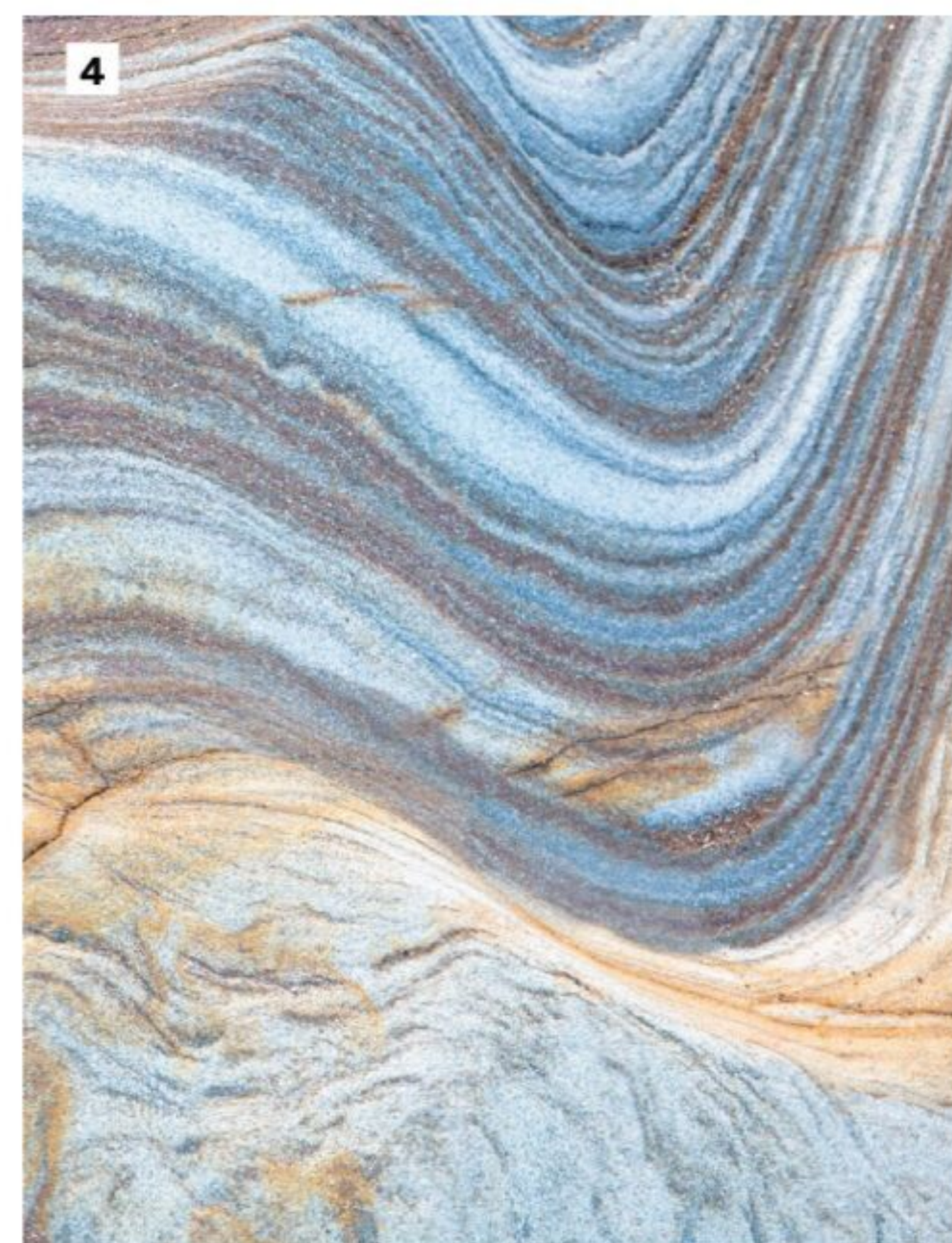
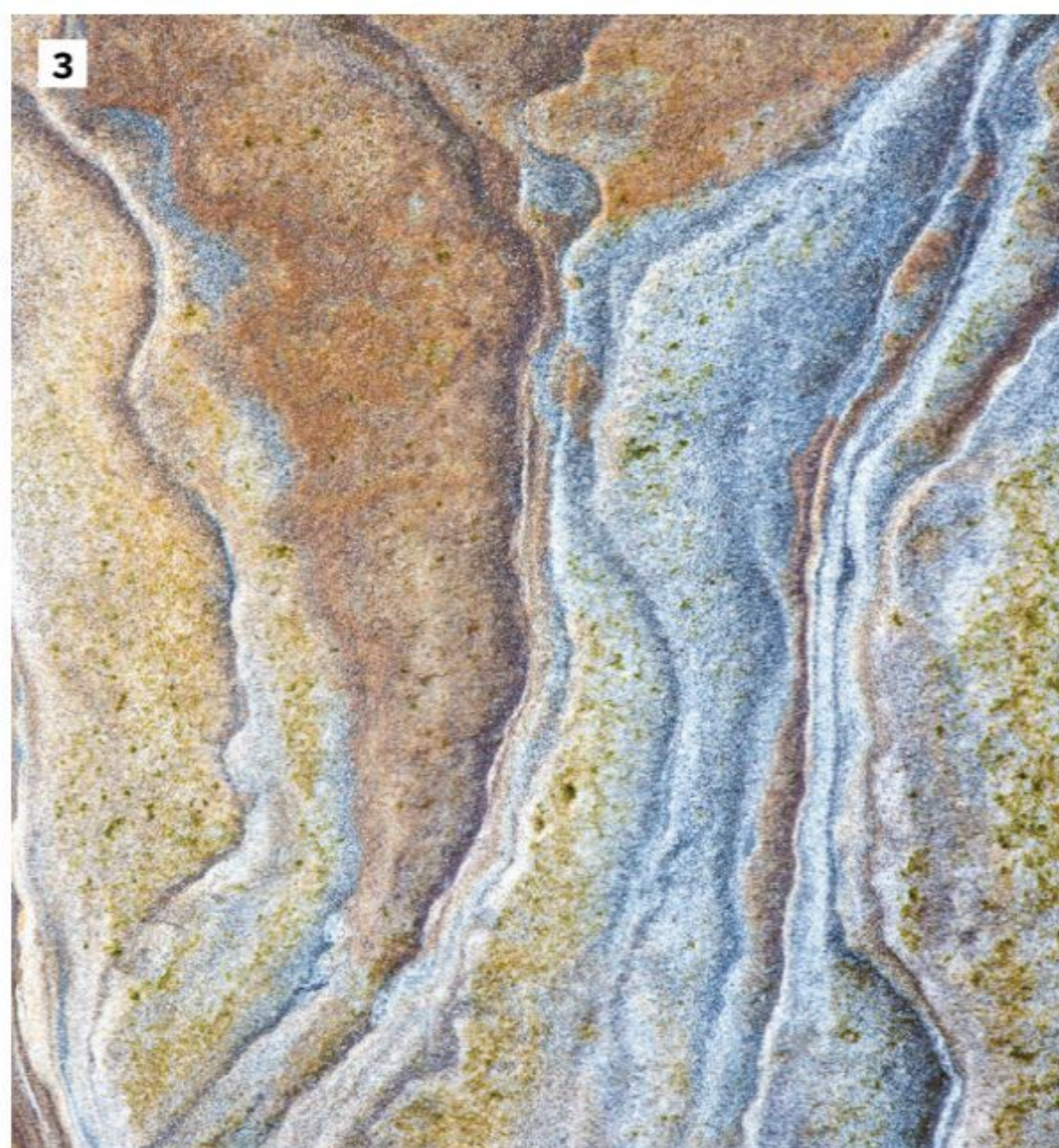
2 Set up your equipment Mount your camera on a tripod, compose the detail as you want to shoot it and focus the lens. Set your DSLR to aperture priority and the lens to f8 or f11. Getting the exposure correct should be easy, but use exposure compensation if necessary to correct any errors.

3 Take the first shot Start to look for any interesting lines, colours, shapes, patterns and textures in the rock. Once you're happy with the composition, take the shot then assess it on the preview screen and ask yourself how it could be improved. The first take is rarely the best.

4 Move to another spot It's always worth having a look around the location for other options as you can often shoot many different images in a small area. Remove sand and other debris if necessary (carry a small paintbrush for this job), or you can splash water on the rocks to add a wet look.

5 Add a focal point If the shots lack scale or depth, consider adding another element. This colourful pebble was found nearby on the beach, and though it was added to the composition, there's no reason why it couldn't have been there naturally, washed onto the rocks by a wave.

6 Develop the idea Often, detail shots evolve as you experiment with ideas and compositions. In this case, the addition of a pebble worked, so that idea was developed by finding and adding more pebbles on a different area of the rock formation. The swirls and lines in the rock carry the eye towards them.



The setup

TIME IT RIGHT

These rock formations are only accessible when the tide is receding, so it was important to check tide times in advance

WEATHER OR NOT

The weather on the day was dull, cloudy and damp, creating perfect conditions to shoot rock details as the light was soft and contrast low

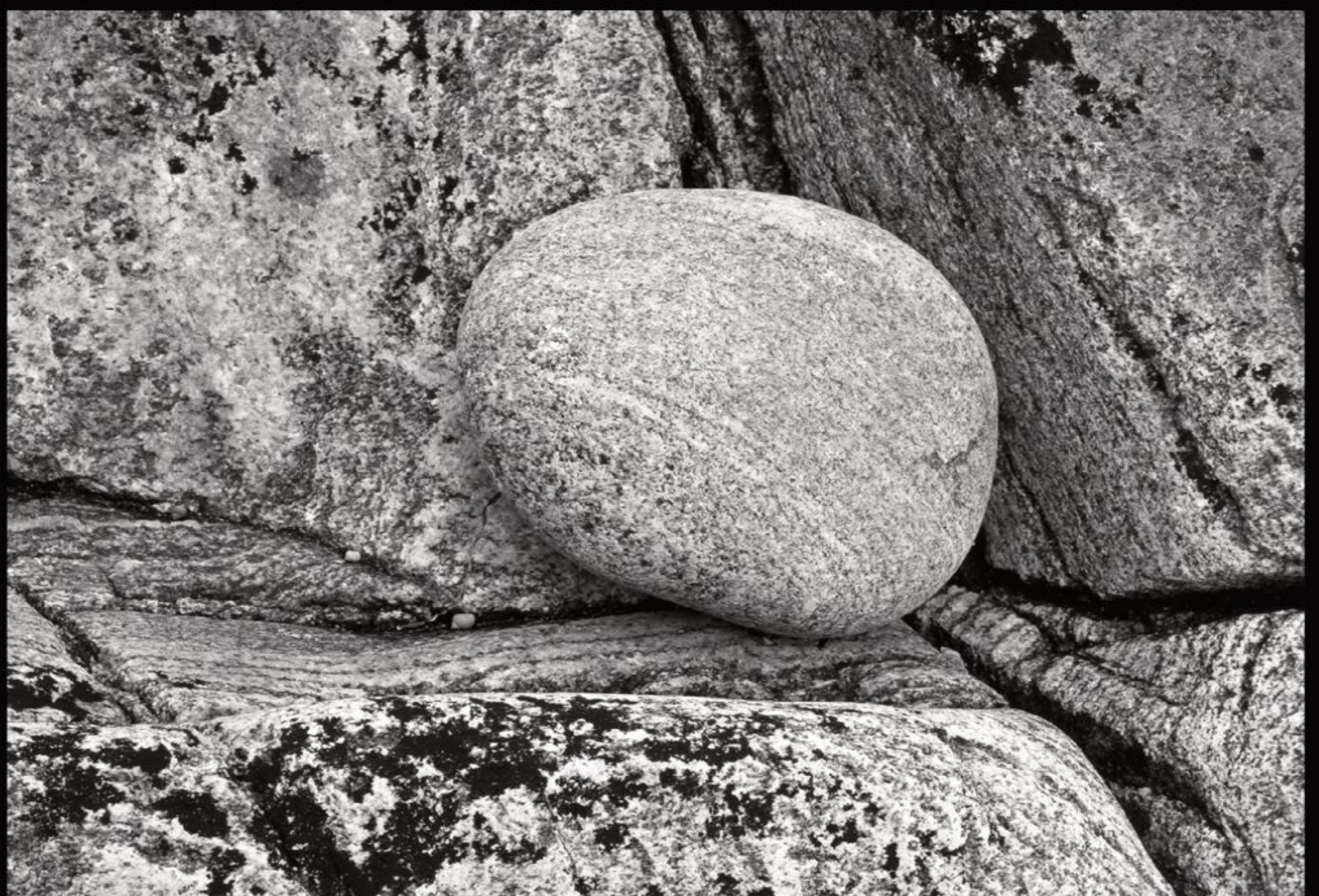
COMPOSITION

Time was spent looking for interesting details in the rock formation and the shots were taken using a full-frame DSLR and 24-70mm zoom

Convert to black and white

Simplify your rock images by removing colour

The main images in this tutorial rely on colour for much of their appeal. The subject matter was naturally colourful, so making a feature of that colour was relevant and effective. However, the majority of rock formations you're likely to encounter in the landscape are usually quite drab, so don't feel that the final images always have to be in colour. Converting detail images to black and white can work well as it helps to focus attention on textures and shapes. You can also boost contrast to make the tones bolder and really strip the image down to its bare bones. The conversion can be done during RAW file processing, or in Lightroom or Photoshop. Alternatively, use a third-party application like Silver Efex Pro 2.



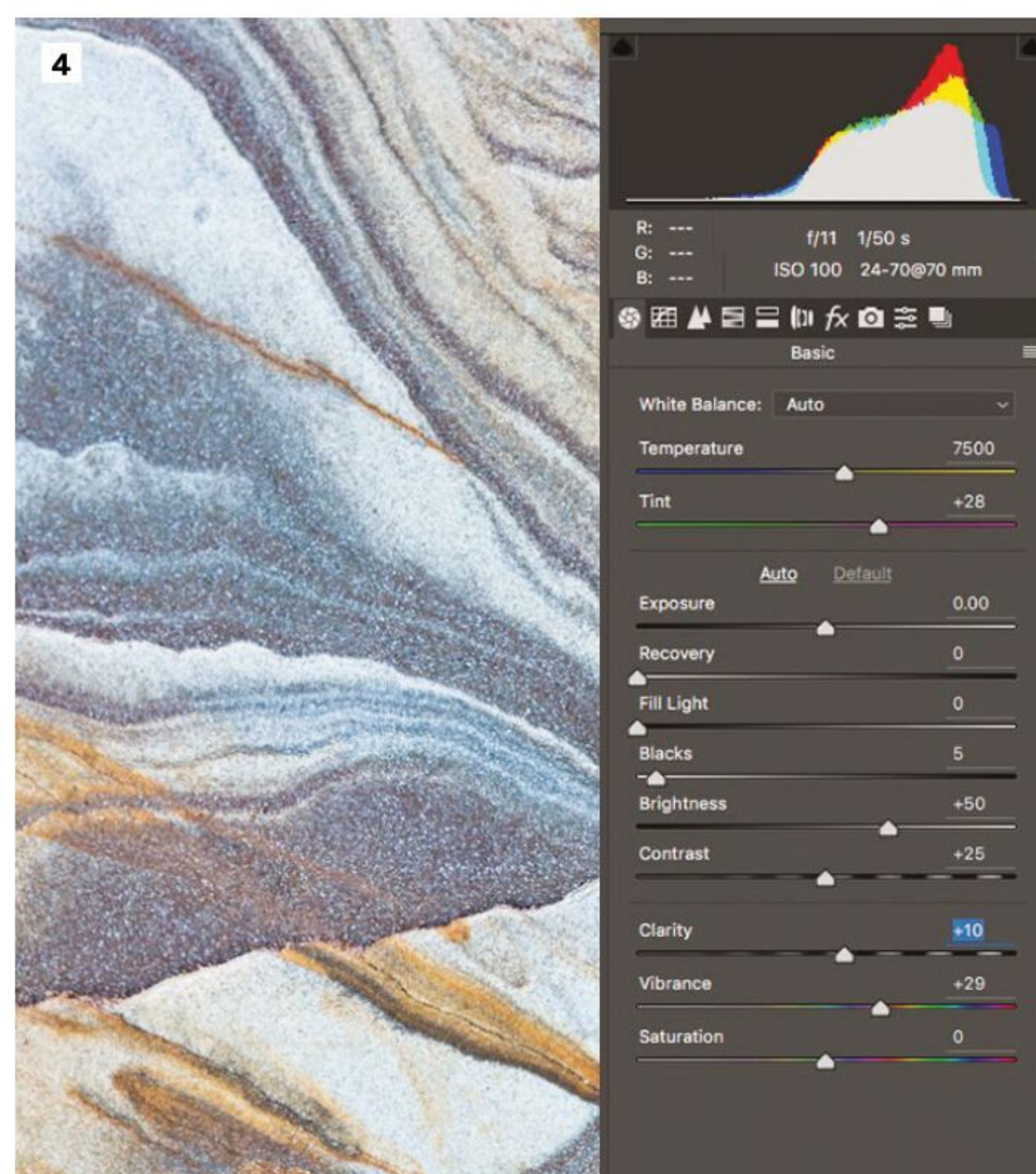
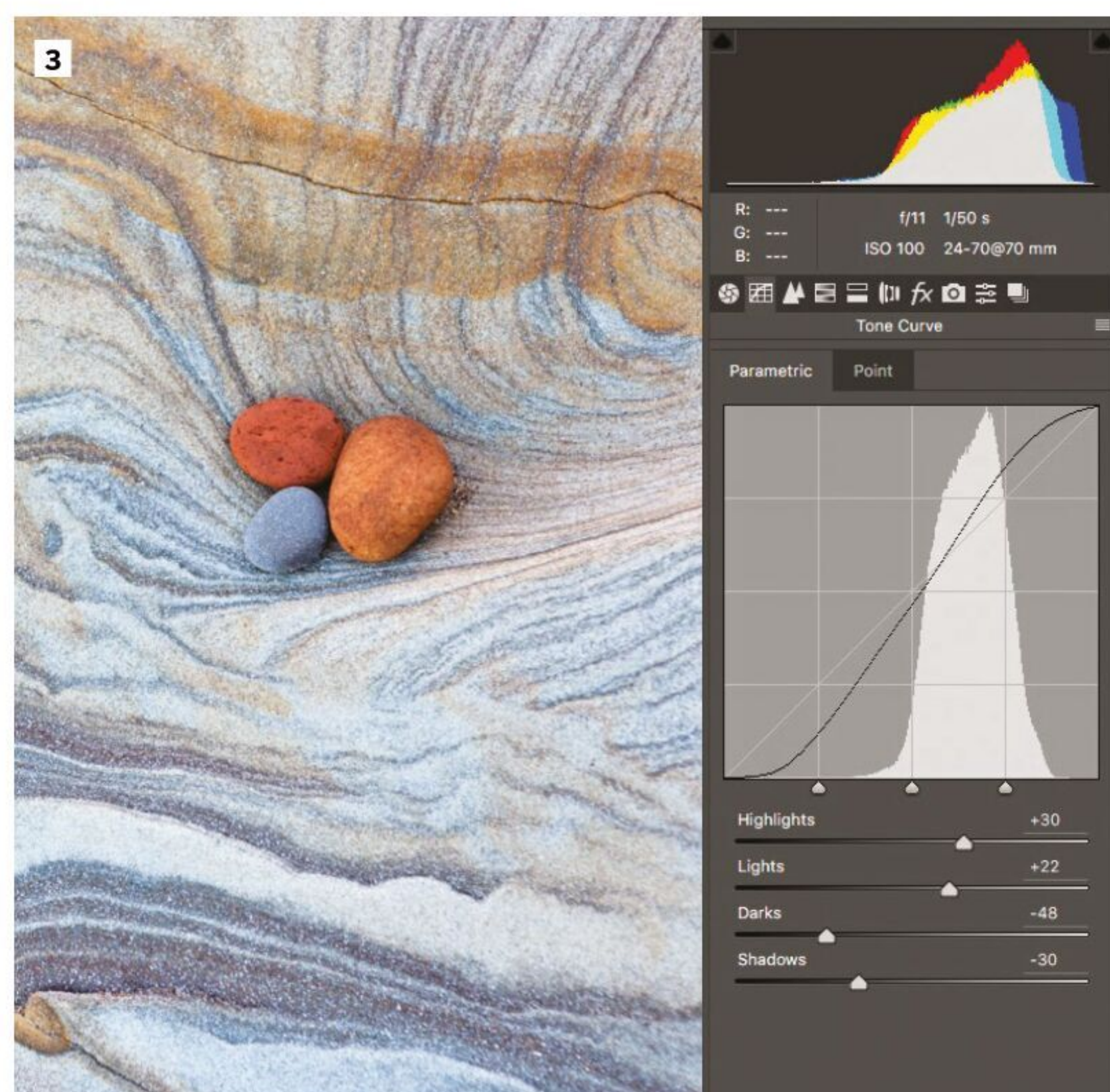
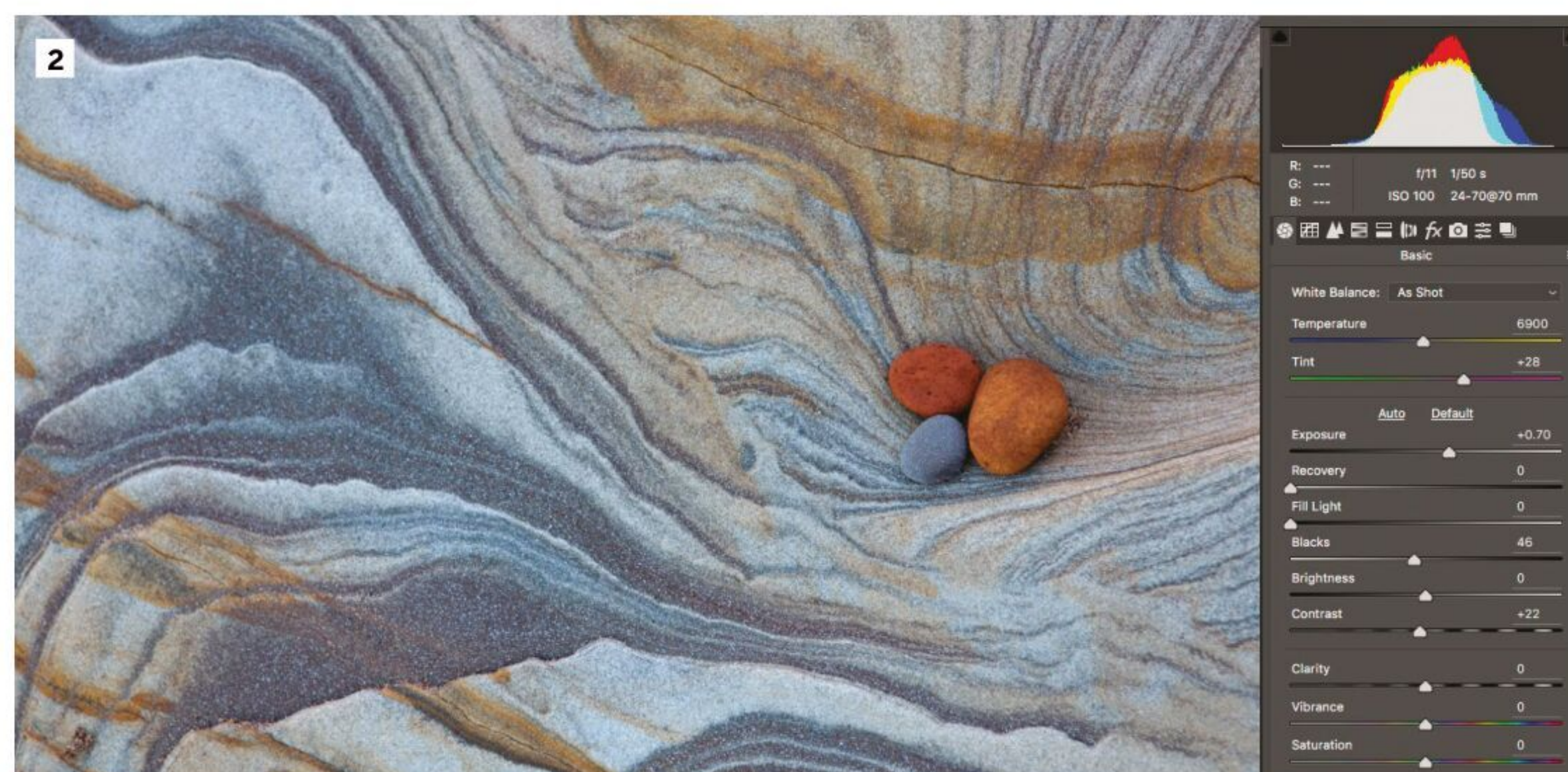
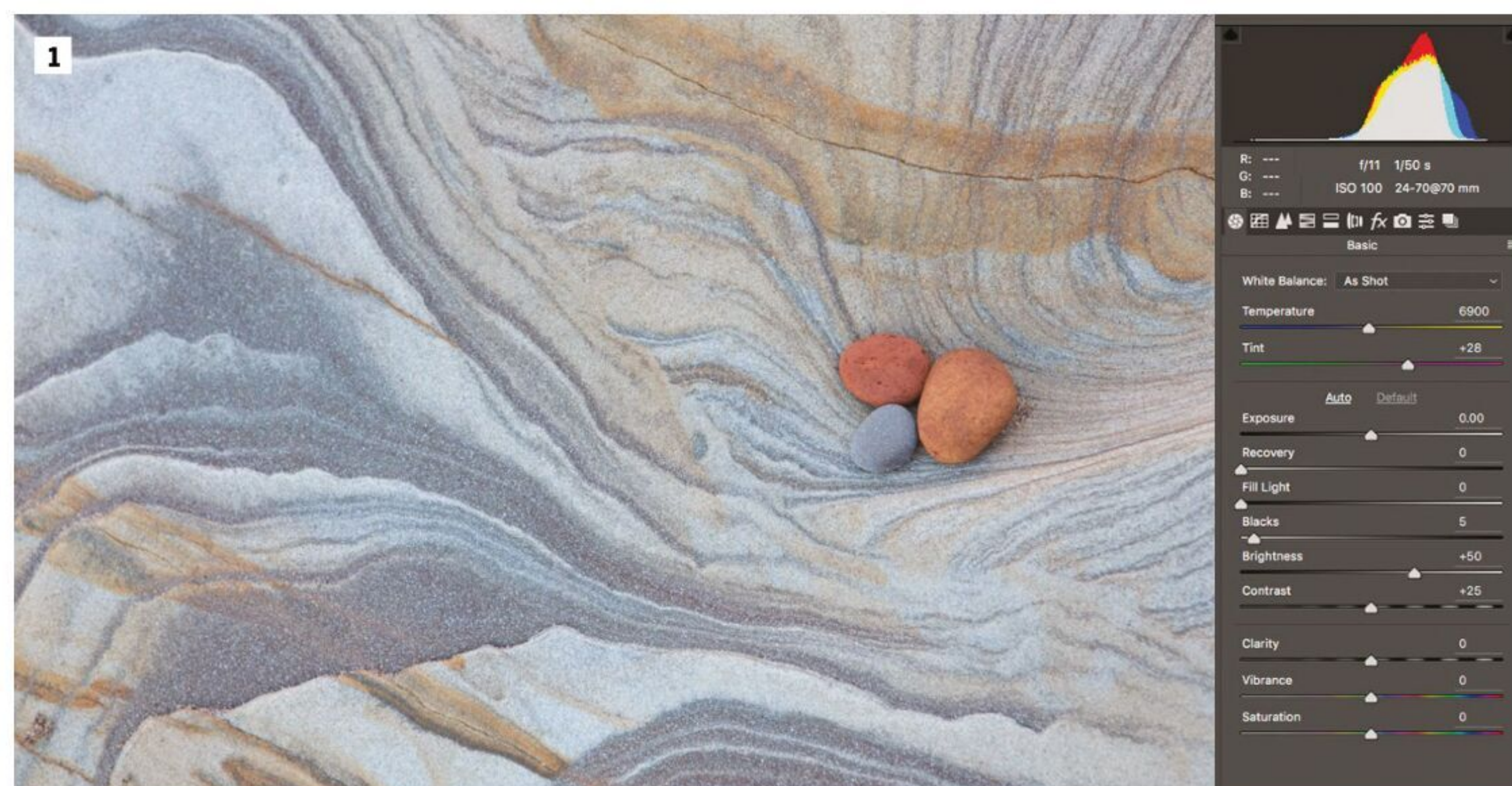
Editing steps

1 Open the RAW file To begin we open the RAW file in Adobe Camera Raw in Photoshop CC 2018. It's fine in terms of the composition and exposure, but as is usually the case with a RAW file, it appears a little flat.

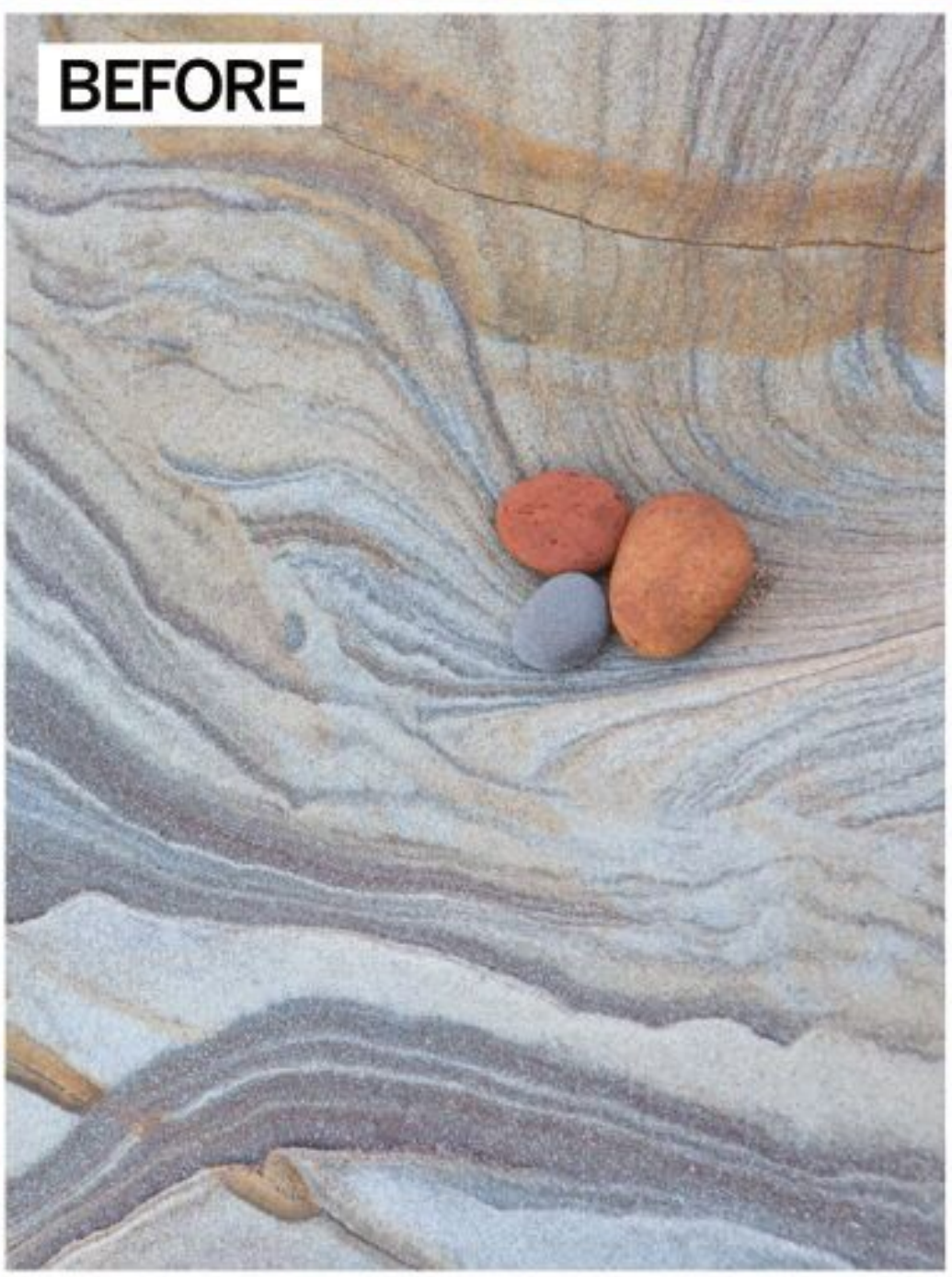
2 Try the Auto tab Select the Auto option under the Basic menu to see what Photoshop will do to the image. It tends to work much better in the latest version of CC, but in this case the image appears underexposed.

3 Make basic edits Click the Default tab to take the RAW file back to its original state. Next apply Lens Corrections and Profiles, then adjust the Tone Curve to brighten the image and boost contrast.

4 Perform final tweaks To finish, increase Clarity to +10 to enhance the texture of the rock, the Vibrance to +29 to boost colours and select the Auto option under White Balance, which increases the colour temperature from 6,900 to 7,500.



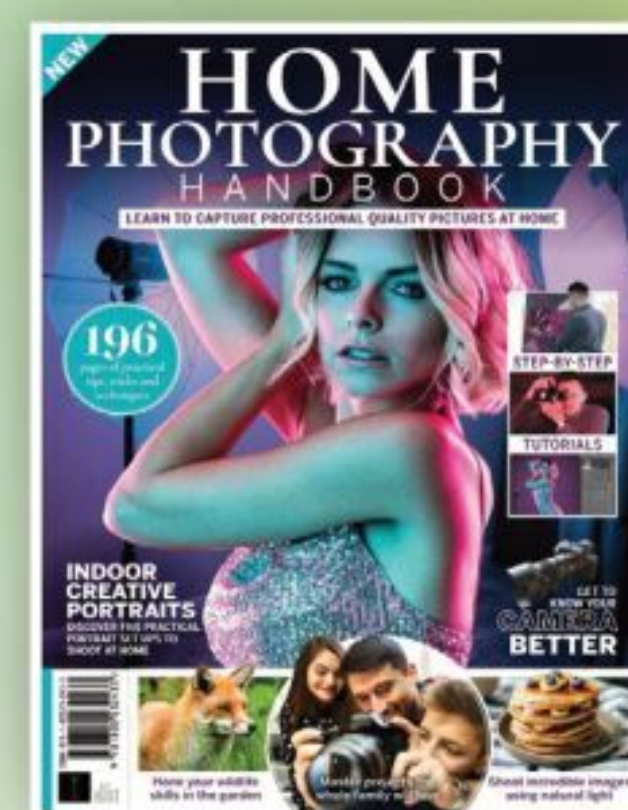
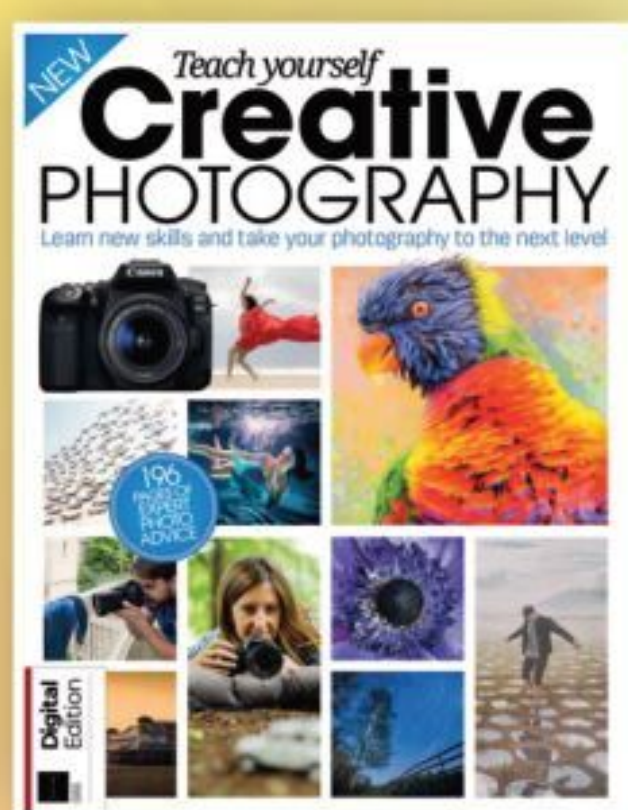
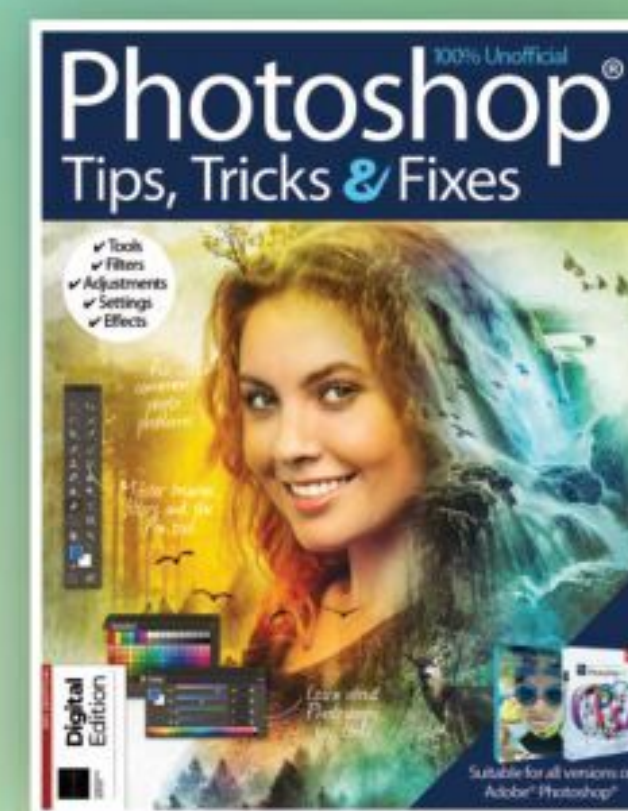
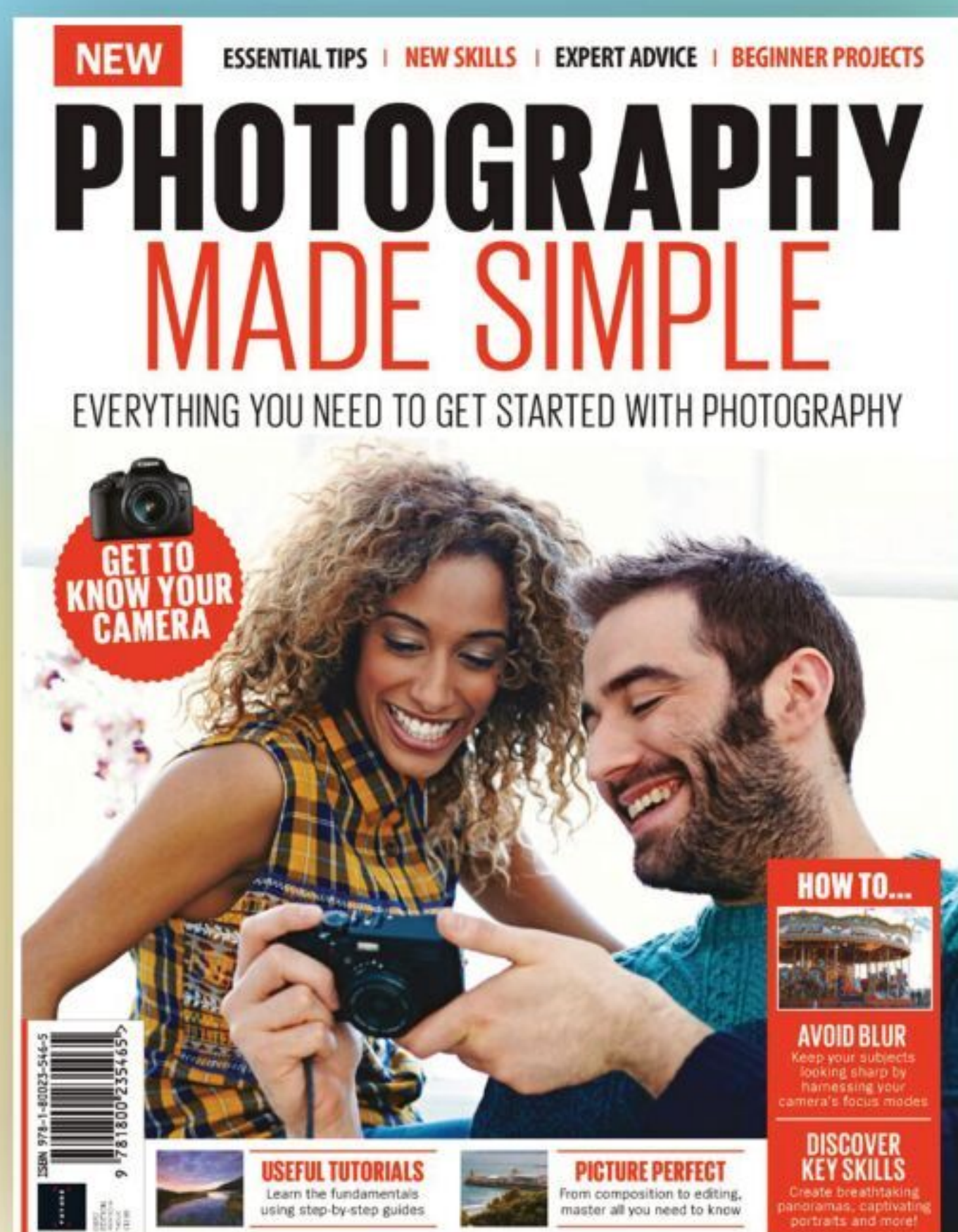
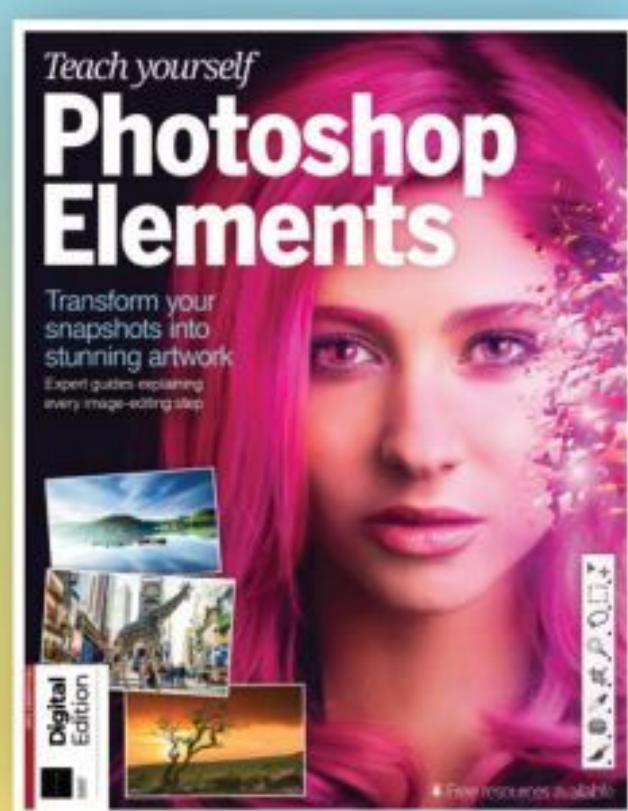
BEFORE



Rock art

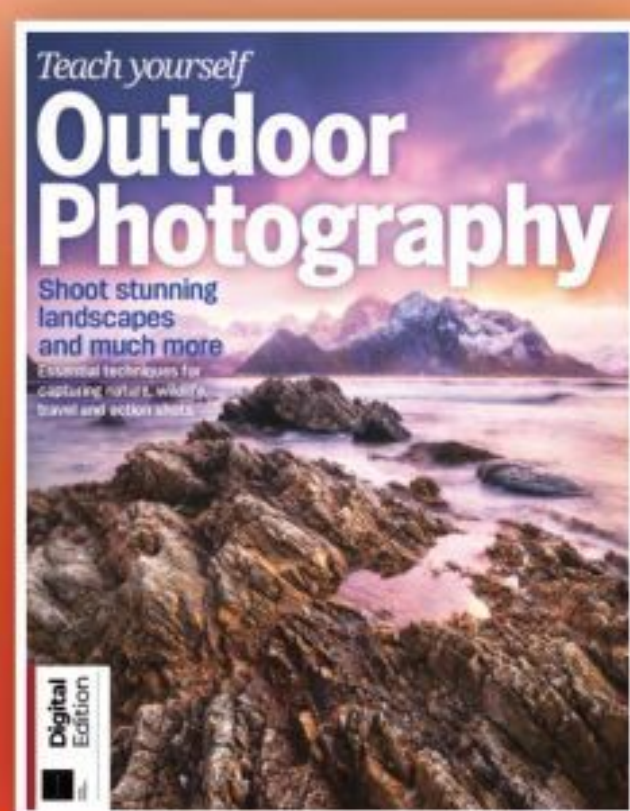
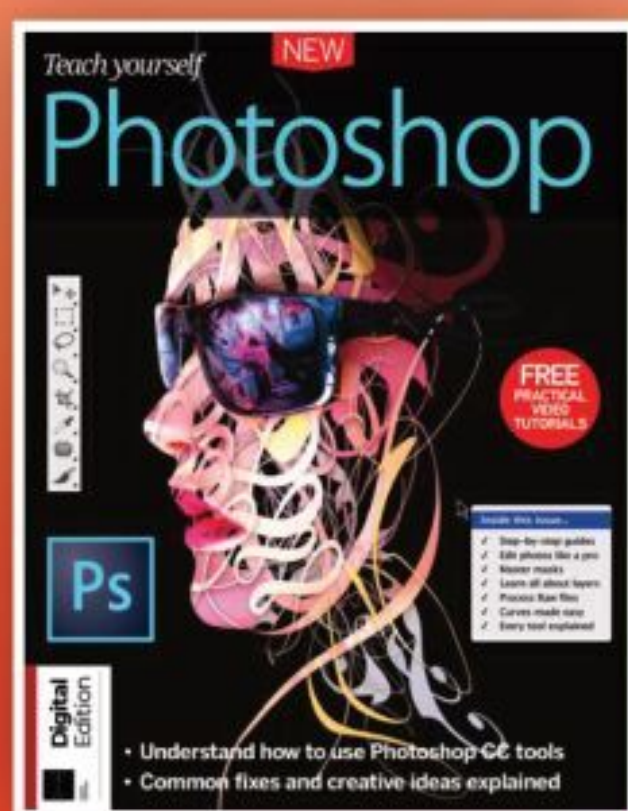
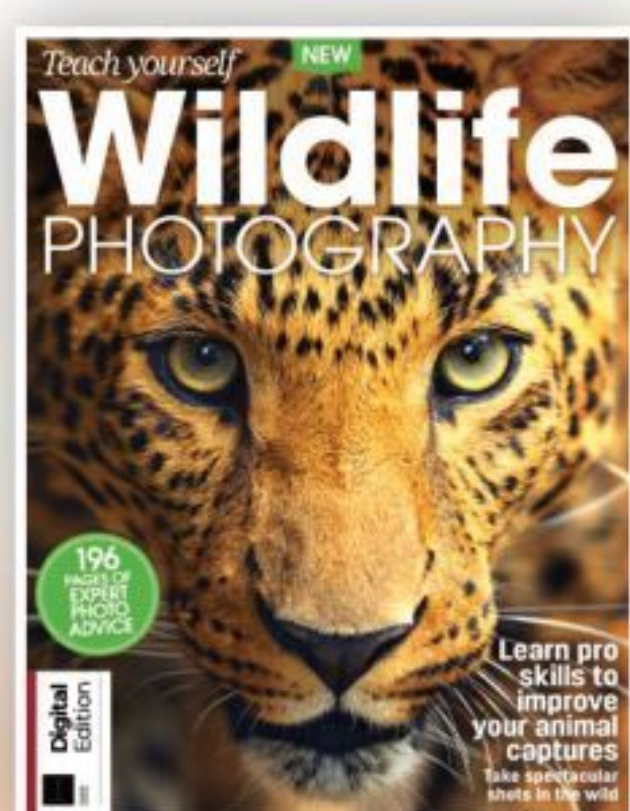
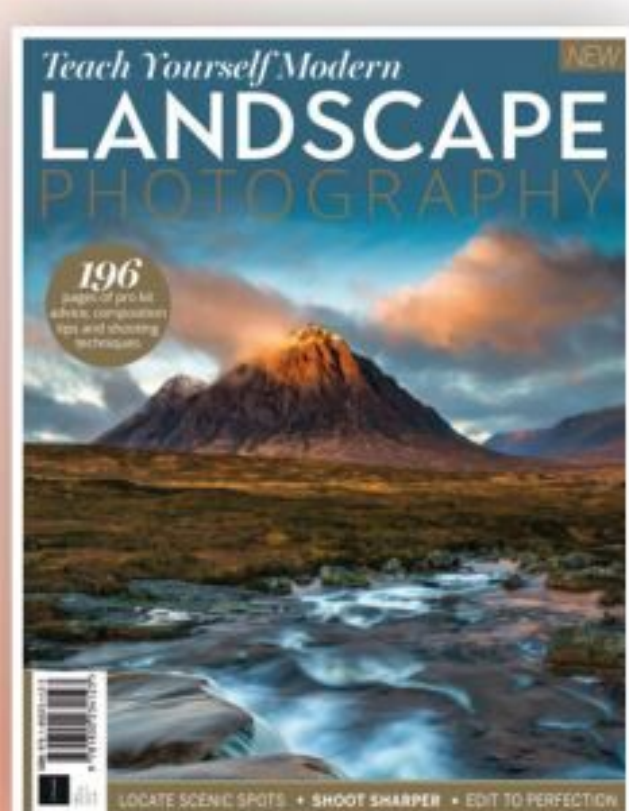
Boosting colour, contrast and clarity transformed the rather flat-looking RAW file into a striking fine art image. Basic editing is often all you need

AFTER



MASTER YOUR CAMERA WITH OUR BOOKAZINES

From tech to techniques, learn to take better shots with our essential photography guides and handbooks



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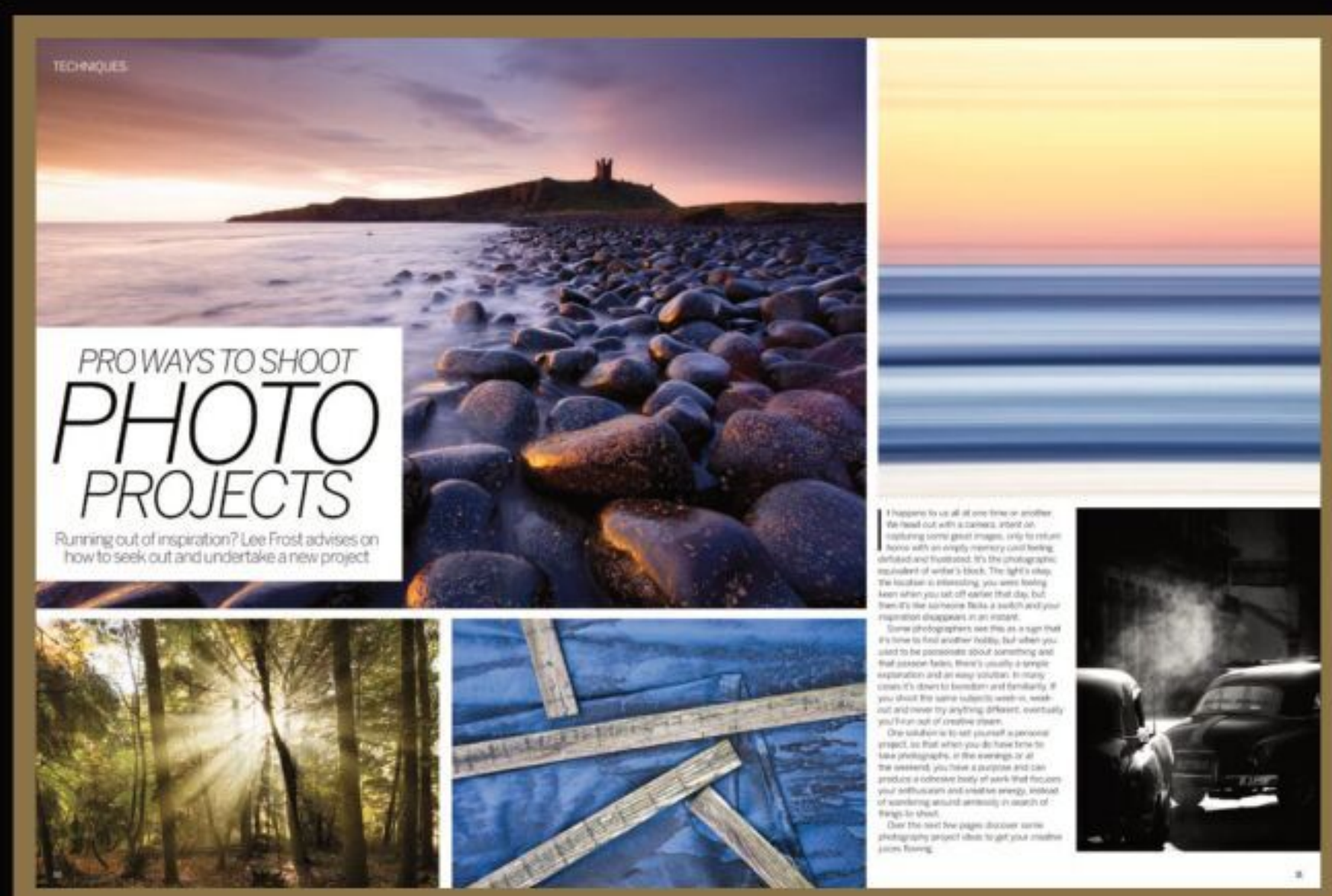


SHOOT LIKE A PRO

Enhance your photography skills with professional secrets



GET MORE FROM YOUR DSLR
Discover unused potential in
your digital camera



WORK LIKE A PRO
Learn how to approach photo projects
in a new way for high-end captures



MASTER VIDEO
Add video making to your set of skills
and keep up with your peers



PERFECT YOUR WORKFLOW
Find out how to handle your
images post capture

Discover pro level projects
to enhance your skills

Earn money and
streamline your business

Learn how to produce
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